

INSPECTION REPORT

ASHLAWN SCHOOL

Rugby

LEA area: Warwickshire Eastern

Unique reference number: 125751

Headteacher: Mr Peter Rossborough

Lead inspector: Mr David Klemm

Dates of inspection: 20th – 24th October 2003

Inspection number: 259396

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 to 19
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1469

School address: Ashlawn Road
Rugby
Warwickshire
CV22 5ET

Telephone number: 01788 573425
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr. John Moore

Date of previous inspection: 9th – 13th February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ashlawn School is an above average sized mixed bilateral school in a semi-rural location for pupils and students aged 11 to 18. It serves Rugby and surrounding areas. The school has 30 places a year reserved for pupils who are successful in the Warwickshire eleven plus examinations. There are 216 additional places in each year although, exceptionally, there are 280 pupils in the present Year 7. There are 1469 on roll including 214 in the sixth form. The school has a diverse number of pupils from a range of ethnic heritages. 10.1% (148) of the pupils in the school have English as an additional language, which is high compared to many schools. All are at the upper intermediate or advanced stages of learning English and there are no pupils at the early stages. The main languages other than English spoken by the pupils are Gujarati, Urdu and Punjabi. The school receives funding from the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant (EMTAG) for 1.6 specialist assistant teachers, who also support ethnic minority pupils with literacy needs.

79 per cent of pupils are white British and 19 per cent are Asian British Indian. Pupils are from a wide range of backgrounds and their attainment on entry is around the national average. Ashlawn is the designated school for pupils with physical disabilities in East Warwickshire. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2049	David Klemm	Lead inspector	
9649	Jean Smith	Lay inspector	
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	Psychology
30702	Paul Bowyer	Team inspector	Mathematics
12356	Richard Dickason	Team inspector	Science
4355	Frank Earle	Team inspector	History
2628	James Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education
23480	Mary Harding	Team inspector	Religious education; Citizenship
11969	John Hardy	Team inspector	Design and technology; Business studies
20287	Desmond Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
11044	Jeanie Hedge	Team inspector	English
27665	Arlene Lees	Team inspector	Music
24887	Yvonne Salmons	Team inspector	German
31096	John Thornhill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art and design, Media studies
33002	John Woodhouse	Team inspector	Geography

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT ON ASHLAWN SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ashlawn School is an **effective** school which provides **very good value for money**. Pupils and students have very positive attitudes to their work and each other. The quality of relationships amongst pupils and students from different ethnic backgrounds is very good and the school is a civilised institution where pupils and students behave well, work hard at their studies and learn effectively.

The school has been successful in raising standards in the national tests at 14 and at GCSE. Pupils are doing better at Ashlawn than in most schools nationally. In 2002 these efforts were recognised with the school receiving an achievement award. The school has focused for the last few years on developing the quality of teaching and assessment and this has had a positive impact on learning. The senior team has worked hard with staff and pupils to create an enthusiasm for learning and this is continuing to have an impact on improving standards.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good with a high number of very good and excellent lessons. Teaching in the expressive arts is a strength. In the best lessons teachers have a very good command of their subjects, expectations are high and the pace of learning is brisk. Good quality assessment and the setting of individual targets enhances pupils' learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language are making at least as much progress as other pupils.
- The care and welfare of pupils is very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and each other.
- There are very good opportunities for enrichment activities including extra-curricular activities and residential experiences and trips.
- The headteacher provides very effective leadership. He is well supported by his senior team and other key staff. The school is well managed and there is a relentless pursuit of further improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching across the school with a high number of weaknesses in modern foreign languages.
- The quality of links with parents in regard to their children's progress, especially reports, is unsatisfactory.
- The school is not meeting legal requirements with regard to a daily act of collective worship and there is insufficient time for religious education and citizenship across the school.
- There are inadequacies in resources, especially computers, in some subject areas. Many classrooms are in a poor state of repair and in need of decoration. The toilets should be renovated as soon as resources allow.

How the school has changed since the previous inspection

The school has improved substantially since the last inspection in 1998. Students' and pupils' attitudes are now very good. In 2002 and 2003 standards at the end of Year 9 were significantly better, and at GCSE better, than at the last inspection. Results at A-level were below average at the last inspection and are now average. Teaching is improving as a result of the school emphasising in all its work the importance of effective pupil learning. The leadership of middle management has improved significantly and, although the amount of time for religious education is still limited, the quality of spiritual provision across the curriculum has improved. Work still needs to be done to extend the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Standards in Years 7 to 11 are **above average** and pupils achieve **well**. In the sixth form standards are **average** and **improving** and students' achievements are **good**.

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

*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 GCSE are well above the national average and in 2003 improved further. In the majority of subjects pupils make good and sometimes very good progress. Standards in the 2002 Year 9 national tests in English, mathematics and science were in the highest twenty per cent of schools nationally. In 2003 standards improved further especially in English.

Pupils achieve well across the school and especially in Years 7 to 9. They are articulate, write accurately and their numeracy skills are good. They are developing satisfactory skills in using ICT which need to be developed in all subjects.

Most pupils across the school are achieving standards at least in line with their capabilities and many are doing better than expected. Higher attaining pupils are not doing as well they could in some subject areas. In a number of modern languages lessons, pupils across the attainment range are not realising fully their potential.

Pupils' attitudes to work and each other are very positive and behaviour and attendance are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Pupils are developing good learning skills. They are actively involved in the assessment of their work and many understand what they need to do to improve. The school is having some success in encouraging independent learning. Teaching overall is **good** and some is excellent. There is some unsatisfactory teaching which affects learning but in the majority of lessons teachers have high expectations and pupils learn well. Assessment is used well to develop learning and most marking helps pupils to improve their work. The curriculum across the school provides pupils and students with good learning opportunities although there is insufficient time for religious education and citizenship.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher leads the school very well. Management by senior staff is very good. Leadership and management are good at middle management level both pastorally and academically. Pupils are supported very well. The school has recognised the need to concentrate on improving learning which is now central to the school improvement plan, produced after extensive discussions within the school. The governors perform their duties satisfactorily.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are very pleased with the quality of education their children are receiving but some are concerned about the reports they receive about their children's progress. The inspection team

agrees that the quality of reports to parents is poor and the school needs to spend more time consulting with parents about significant changes in school. The school accepts the need to do this and to improve reports. Pupils enjoy school life and are positive about the quality of teaching and the opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure that all teaching in modern foreign languages is at least satisfactory;
- improve communication with parents including the quality of reports to parents;
- provide sufficient time for the teaching of citizenship and religious education across the school in order to meet statutory requirements;
- improve classroom accommodation and toilets and provide more computers in classrooms.

The school is not meeting statutory requirements in providing a daily act of collective worship and in providing experience of computer-assisted design and manufacture in design and technology.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 214 students in the sixth form; the majority are female. It has more students than most schools and has a large number of students from different ethnic groups. The majority of pupils who leave the school at the end of Year 11 do so to pursue vocational courses at the local college or for employment or modern apprenticeships. A small number join neighbouring school sixth forms to follow courses the school cannot offer because of economic constraints. Entry to the sixth form to study A-level or advanced vocational courses is on the basis of students having attained a grade C in the course they wish to pursue and four other subjects with at least a grade C. Students have the choice of 18 A-level subjects and four advanced vocational courses. Those students who have not reached this standard can study for an intermediate GNVQ in business studies. There are opportunities for students to improve their GCSE grades in English and mathematics. At the end of Year 13 ninety per cent of students continue their studies in higher education.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Sixth form provision is good overall. There is a good range of academic courses and a satisfactory number of advanced vocational courses including provision for student apprenticeships. Many students start their courses with relatively modest GCSE qualifications but make good progress and achieve at least average standards in their examinations. The number of students achieving the highest grades is below what might be expected. Teaching is good and students respond well to the challenges of advanced studies. The school provides a good learning environment where students develop well both academically and personally. The sixth form is very well led and managed and students comment favourably on the support they receive from both their teachers and sixth form staff. A very high number of students choose to continue their studies after Year 12 in Year 13.

Sixth form provision is cost effective overall although some of the small groups studying advanced level subjects are subsidised by the large groups in some vocational courses.

The main strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form are:

- Students make good progress in the sixth form in relation to their attainment on entry.
- Students receive good personal support and guidance from supportive teachers.
- Relationships amongst students and between staff and students are very good.
- Teaching is good because teachers have a confident command of their subjects and engage students' interest in their studies.

- The number of students who leave the sixth form without completing their courses is very low.
- Relatively few students achieve grades A and B.
- There is insufficient specialist advice on careers, although school advice on higher education options is very good.
- Common room accommodation is too small for the numbers who wish to use it.

How the sixth form has changed since the previous inspection

At the last inspection, on a relatively small sample of lessons, standards were below average and teaching and learning were judged to be very good. Standards are now average and improving and teaching and learning are good overall. Sixth form provision has improved. Good progress has been made.

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. Eleven subjects in the sixth form were inspected and the rest sampled.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English literature - Very good. Standards are average and students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are very good. German - Satisfactory. Standards are below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students are making satisfactory progress.
Mathematics	Mathematics - Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good and overall achievement is satisfactory with some students making good progress. Standards are average.
Science	Biology - Satisfactory. Standards are below average but students are making satisfactory progress. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Information and communication technology	Information and communication technology - Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are now starting to improve although standards are below average and students' achievements over time remain unsatisfactory.
Humanities	History - Satisfactory. Standards are average and are improving. Achievement is satisfactory with students from ethnic minority groups doing particularly well. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Psychology - Very good. Standards are above average and students achieve well because teaching is very good.
Business	Business - Satisfactory. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Teaching overall is satisfactory although some is very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Music - Very good. Standards are above average and students achieve very well especially in Year 13. Both teaching and learning are very good. Media studies - Very good. Standards are well above average.

Students are achieving very well as a result of very good teaching.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel

Physical education - Good. Students achieve well and reach average standards. Teaching and learning are good.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Pastoral staff and subject teachers provide good support and guidance. Information about sixth form courses is very good and students are well prepared for making university applications. Students are kept well informed about their progress although the quality of their annual written reports is unsatisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are very good. The post-16 programme is efficiently managed and is monitored carefully. Planning for future developments is open and consultative.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Although some students feel that staff do not treat them as mature young adults the majority are positive about the school and the quality of their teachers. Their complaints about the lack of specialist careers advice appear justified and the common room is far too small for the numbers who use the space. Many students talked warmly about how teachers helped them to cope with personal problems and although there were criticisms about the limited number of social events there was also an acknowledgement that extra-curricular activities were provided and there were good opportunities for social and community work. Some students feel that they needed more assistance when making the transition from GCSE to advanced studies.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

In GCSE examinations standards in 2002 were well above the national average based on average points score and in 2003 there was a significant improvement. The percentage of pupils attaining five A*-C grades was 63.2 per cent in 2003 as compared with 58.8 per cent in 2002. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational make similar progress to other pupils. By Year 11 pupils are attaining **above average** standards and achieving **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average across the school. Pupils achieve well.
- Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils in the school.
- Boys reach higher standards than in many schools nationally.
- Some higher attaining pupils are not achieving as well as they could in some subjects.

Commentary

1. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are around the national average. Pupils make good progress and achieve above average standards at the end of Year 9 in most of their subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.8 (34.9)	33.3 (33.0)
Mathematics	35.9 (36.2)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	35.1 (35.2)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 246 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In the 2002 national tests standards in English were just above the national average but were significantly stronger in 2003. In mathematics and science they were above the national average and were significantly stronger in both subjects in 2003. Pupils made very good progress in mathematics and science and good progress in English. These results placed the school in the top 20 per cent of schools nationally in terms of pupils' progress from the beginning of Year 7 and the trend of improvement was above that nationally.
3. 2002 GCSE results were well above the national average and were even better in 2003. The progress pupils made from Year 9 to 11 in the 2002 and 2003 GCSE results was good. Pupils have achieved well. Boys achieved results well above the national average for boys, and girls achieved results above the national average. Standards are improving faster than in most schools nationally. The percentage of pupils attaining A* and A grades was below that in most schools nationally although high attaining pupils did well in design and technology and art and design.
4. Standards observed during the inspection week largely reflect these results. In Years 7 to 9 pupils achieve very well in science, English and music and achieve well in mathematics, geography, history, design and technology and art and design. Achievement is satisfactory in

other subjects. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is very good in science, music and art and design and good in English, mathematics, geography, history, religious education and design and technology. Achievement in other subjects is satisfactory except in modern languages where it is unsatisfactory.

5. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve at least as well as all other pupils and make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress in achieving their individual targets and, as their reading and spelling improves, they grow in self-esteem and confidence. Their progress is carefully monitored and many achieve very well in GCSE and go on to further education. They achieve well in most subjects, and particularly in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and history.
6. High attaining pupils achieve well in mathematics and very well in science where teachers have high expectations and the pace of learning is brisk. In some geography, ICT, English, modern foreign languages and physical education lessons there is insufficient challenge in the work set and expectations are not high enough.
7. Pupils have good speaking and listening skills. Standards in spelling and punctuation are better than the national average. Pupils read well and can make accurate notes. Their research skills are good. Some higher attaining pupils write with flair and sensitivity. Numerical skills are good and are used well in subjects such as science, design and technology and physical education. ICT skills are satisfactory and improving although they are not used enough across the curriculum.
8. Standards are improving because most pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and enjoy learning. They are well supported by their parents and the quality of teaching is good. The majority of pupils are making good progress and are achieving appropriate standards. Some high attaining pupils are not fully realising their potential.

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	58.8 (49.6)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97.9 (95.5)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98.0 (96.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	45.2 (N/A)	39.8 (N/A)

There were 243 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth form

Standards are **average** and improving and students achieve **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in examinations are improving.
- Students are achieving well in most subjects.
- Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

9. In 2002 results in A-level and AVCE examinations at the end of the sixth form were average and in 2003 they improved. This represents considerable progress from 2001 when they were well below average. The number of students achieving grades A-E has improved and there has

been some improvement in the number of students achieving higher grades. The majority of students continue with their studies from AS to A2. Results in the vocational course provision in 2002 were well above average in travel and tourism, average in health and social course and below average in information technology and business.

10. Many students start their post-16 studies with the minimum requirements for advanced studies and in the lessons and work seen during the inspection they achieve well, make good progress and attain average standards. Students are achieving very well in English literature, music and media studies and achieve well in psychology and physical education. In ICT achievement is unsatisfactory although the quality of teaching has started to improve and this should help to improve standards. Students develop good learning skills in the sixth form and many are capable of working well on their own. Their mature approach to learning contributes well to their achievements.
11. Standards in numeracy are average. In physics mathematical skills are well developed. Students use well the Internet for research and independent work. There is some good use of ICT in lessons but this needs further development. Students' communication skills are generally good.

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	96.8	95.9
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30.5	42.2
Average point score per pupil	213.0	263.3

There were 93 students in the year group.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are very positive and behaviour and attendance are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths

- Pupils' very positive attitudes to school and to work.
- Racial harmony amongst all ethnic groups.
- The very effective monitoring and promotion of attendance.

Commentary

12. Pupils speak positively about the school. They like the good range of extra-curricular activities and school trips. In lessons they work hard and are keen to succeed. Behaviour in lessons is usually very good but in a small number of lessons the behaviour of some pupils disrupts the learning of all. Unsatisfactory behaviour usually occurs in lessons where there are weaknesses in teaching or the management of behaviour but in some lessons a minority of older pupils show a lack of commitment to their learning. Behaviour around the school is generally good. The level of fixed-term exclusions is comparable to other schools of this size and the level of permanent exclusions is low. Exclusions are given appropriately either for serious incidents of misbehaviour or to uphold the school's strict stance against smoking.

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	1127	80	3
White – Irish	10	0	0
White – any other White background	13	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	18	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	14	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	21	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	119	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	31	3	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	8	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	10	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	38	1	0

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

13. Relationships throughout the school are based on mutual respect. Racial harmony is a strength of the school. Everyone mixes well together and there are very few incidents of a racial nature. Incidents of bullying occur from time to time but pupils and parents agree that the school deals with these effectively. As in many schools, inconsiderate name-calling is a problem. A group of Year 9 pupils commented on the anti-work, or 'anti-boff', culture in the school which discourages them from contributing fully in class. The school is aware of the problem and has taken some early steps to address it. However, it has not yet consulted pupils through a survey on bullying and name-calling in order to obtain a clear idea of patterns of incidence.
14. Pupils with English as an additional language have very good attitudes to learning and are well integrated into the school community. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They work hard in lessons, concentrate well and are keen to succeed. They respond very well to challenge and relish their success. Behaviour and classroom relationships are very good.
15. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility as school counsellors, library monitors and as Year 10 friends for Year 7. Pupils show initiative by organising charity events and doing form assemblies. For example, Year 9 pupils did a good assembly about options which showed they were thinking maturely about their targets for achievement and their responsibility for achieving them. These opportunities for exercising responsibility and initiative are a very effective means of boosting pupils' self-esteem and confidence and the school should consider ways it can provide yet further opportunities.

16. Attendance and punctuality are good and there is a very low rate of truancy. One of the reasons for good attendance is the school's very efficient use of electronic monitoring. For example, the head of Year 9 targets pupils whose attendance drops below eighty per cent by making them come to her first thing in the morning to complete a report sheet with stickers and in almost all cases attendance has improved significantly as a result. Rewards are also used well to encourage good attendance.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.6
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	1.2

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

17. The school has strengthened its provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils by requiring all subject leaders to give specific planning attention to this. The provision for spiritual development is good and much improved although collective worship requirements are still not fully met. The striking annual exhibition 'Song of the Spirit' presented by the personal, social and health education faculty is a powerful example of this improvement. All pupils had visited it and the written responses of many demonstrated some profound thoughts. The school ethos is one in which pupils find encouragement to grow and flourish. This was apparent in assemblies and in the new emphasis on academic mentoring which is intended to help all pupils to realise their potential.
18. Moral provision is good. Ethical teaching is well done in a number of subjects, notably in science in relation to topics such as disease, use of energy and pollution. Attention to personal responsibility and the common good is a strong feature of moral provision, and is well taught within the personal, social, health, citizenship and religious education course. Pupils demonstrate this well in their concern for safety in using equipment in practical lessons, in their generosity towards a number of charities but not so well in their continuing carelessness with litter.
19. There is also good provision for social development through the many opportunities for collaborative work in lessons. The chances for responsible participation in the school and wider community are developing satisfactorily in conjunction with the teaching of citizenship. Pupils are encouraged to use their initiative as Year 9 pupils showed in making their own presentations on careers during assembly. Cultural opportunities are good, especially through art, music, drama, and modern foreign languages. There are worthwhile extra cultural opportunities such as the choirs and bands, and the drama rehearsals for *The Crucible*, all of which recruit keen participants. The boys' choral group is an excellent innovation and very well led. Religious education promotes a strong multi-cultural aspect to the school and responds to the diversity of the school community. Education about cultural diversity has improved.

Sixth form

Students' attitudes to work are very good. They develop responsible and mature relationships within a harmonious learning environment.

Main strengths

- Good relationships with staff.
- Very good attendance.
- Good personal development.

Commentary

20. Most students are very positive about life in the sixth form. They particularly value the good relationships they have with their teachers and amongst themselves. They show a high level of commitment to their work. They play an important role in the school council and in school productions and musical events. They show initiative by organising charity events, an annual ball and regular trips but do not spend enough time tidying up their common room. Their attendance is very good and is very effectively monitored by the school.
21. The provision for students' personal development post-16 is good and mirrors that of the main school. They have the opportunity to experience aesthetic experiences in a number of subjects such as English and art.
22. There are very good opportunities for personal development in tutors' guidance lessons. In a Year 12 lesson, students were examining different learning styles. They benefited from well-planned and varied teaching, and showed they were able to ask pertinent questions to extend their understanding. In most lessons across all subjects they are encouraged to be independent learners and be responsible for themselves and others. They are given good opportunities to speak, listen, discuss and debate. Culturally they share many of the opportunities provided for the main school for visits and activities. Multi-cultural provision has improved since the last inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Pupils and students learn well because the majority have very positive attitudes to work, attend school regularly and are taught well. The good quality of relationships in the school helps to foster an ethos which promotes the work ethic.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. The inspection team saw a high number of excellent and very good lessons where the quality of teaching resulted in pupils learning rapidly and enjoying their work. However, there was some unsatisfactory teaching, especially in modern languages, which resulted in pupils not learning as much as they should have done. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in teaching and learning. The assessment of pupils' work is very effective and pupils now understand better what they need to do to improve. The school monitors teaching and learning rigorously and the senior team are well aware of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and have had some success in improving provision.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- There is some weak teaching in modern foreign languages.
- Lessons engage pupils' interest and classroom management is good.
- There is very good use of assessment to enhance pupils' learning in most subjects.
- In some lessons there is insufficient challenge for high attaining pupils.
- Teaching is good and, sometimes very good, in the expressive arts.

Commentary

23. English teaching is good overall; some is excellent and a small percentage unsatisfactory. Most lessons are well planned, teachers' subject knowledge is good and relationships are very good. Pupils respond well and develop good learning skills. In some lessons the pace of learning is slow, the content is dull and pupils, especially high attainers, do not make enough progress.
24. In mathematics, teaching is good. Most teachers use well a variety of methods and pupils become involved in learning, work hard and improve their skills. In a small number of lessons

teachers do not make clear the learning objectives and pupils lose interest. High attaining pupils achieve well because the work set is demanding. Most science teaching is very good because lessons are well planned with a good variety of activities and teachers have high expectations for pupils. Pupils work hard and develop a very good understanding of scientific processes. High attaining pupils work hard and achieve well.

25. In French and German teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The best teaching makes high but realistic demands of pupils but some teaching lacks challenge and pupils do not learn enough. In ICT teaching is satisfactory but could be improved if tasks were explained more thoroughly and more demanding work were set for higher attainers. Teaching in geography and history is good with particularly effective use of homework to reinforce and extend learning. In design and technology learning is good because teachers plan work thoroughly, use a variety of methods and take account of pupils' different learning needs. Teaching across the expressive arts, including music, art and design, media and drama, is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. This is a strength in the school's curriculum provision. Physical education teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good with pupils making sound progress. The quality of teaching in personal, social, health and careers education is good and makes a significant contribution to the personal development of pupils.
26. Pupils with English as an additional language receive good support from specialist teachers and make good progress. Systems for reviewing their progress are not fully in place and staff are not given up-to-date information about their changing learning needs.
27. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught in the learning development department, because lessons meet their individual needs, stimulate their interest and boost their confidence. Pupils are also well taught in most subjects, as in general the work set is matched to their needs and they are well supported by teaching assistants. Teaching and learning are very good in history because of clear learning goals and a range of interesting activities which lead to enjoyable and enthusiastic learning. Learning is slower in some lessons, in mathematics for example, because support by teaching assistants is not available, and in others, such as ICT, because planning does not focus enough on meeting individual learning needs. Pupils' progress is closely monitored through regular testing and the regular review of individual targets. The objectives set in their statements of special needs are fulfilled well and annual reviews are carried out very thoroughly and effectively.
28. Assessment supports learning very well in mathematics, science, geography, history, design and technology, art and design, music and physical education. In general, the marking of pupils' work is regular, constructive and detailed and pupils are well aware of what they need to do to improve. Assessment data is used very well to set challenging targets for every pupil in the school. Pupils are now being trained to understand the importance of setting targets to improve their learning and form tutors play an important part in reviewing with pupils their progress. There is a need to explain to parents what they can do to help their children to learn.

Sixth form

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in English, psychology, media studies and music.
- Teachers have high expectations.
- The pace of learning in some subjects is slow.

Commentary

29. There is an expectation that students will work hard and achieve well. Strengths in teaching include teachers' support for students to take responsibility for their learning, teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects and generally well-planned lessons. Students feel that the standard of teaching is good and they appreciate that staff are readily available to offer support and guidance.
30. In the subjects inspected teaching and learning were very good in English, psychology, media studies and music and good in mathematics and physical education. In German, history, ICT, business and biology they were satisfactory. In other lessons sampled across the sixth form teaching was good overall.
31. Teaching in English is very good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are intellectually challenging and students develop well their own views on literary texts. In mathematics, teaching is focused on students' individual needs and although students make good progress some do have problems with numeracy and algebraic skills. Psychology teaching is creative and imaginative stimulating students to work hard and understand complex research methods. Their progress is monitored carefully by teachers. In media studies, students make very good progress because teachers use a variety of strategies to develop well students' analytical thinking. Music students develop very good skills in performance and analysis because teaching is demanding and work is thoroughly assessed. In physical education students make good progress because lessons are well planned and targets are set regularly and progress reviewed.
32. Teaching and learning would improve in German, biology, ICT, history and business if the pace of learning were increased and targets for improvement made explicit. There are a small number of unsatisfactory lessons in the sixth form where staff need help to plan lessons using a range of teaching strategies including ICT.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 196 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
14 (7%)	47 (24%)	71(36%)	48(25%)	14(7%)	2(1%)	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

The school offers a **broad** curriculum that meets **well** the needs of the pupils, although throughout the school there is insufficient time for religious education and citizenship. In Years 7 to 9 the allocation of time for the expressive arts and ICT is limited. In Years 10 and 11 there is a good range of academic and vocational courses. The curriculum is enhanced by a very good enrichment programme. There are weaknesses in resources and accommodation across the school although staff and pupils work hard to ensure that standards are not affected. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good as is support for pupils with English as an additional language.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for personal, social and health and careers education is very good.;
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- There is a well-planned programme of academic and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 which match students' interests and aptitudes.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

- Time for religious education and citizenship is inadequate and provision does not meet legal requirements.
- ICT resources are limited in music, media, science and history. There are many classrooms which are in a poor state of decoration including a number of science laboratories which are dilapidated.

Commentary

33. In Years 7 to 9 the National Curriculum is enhanced by opportunities for high attaining pupils to study German as a second language and for all pupils to experience drama. In Years 10 and 11 pupils study a number of core subjects which ensures breadth and there are opportunities for pupils to take vocational courses in leisure and tourism, business studies and health and social care. Other option subjects include drama, media studies and physical education. High attaining pupils can study separate sciences and a second modern language. The school works hard within financial constraints to meet the differing needs of its pupils.
34. Although pupils who have English as an additional language achieve well there is insufficient awareness across the school of their specific English learning needs. A comprehensive policy, including clear assessment, monitoring and communication procedures, needs to be put in place, both for existing pupils, and any future pupils who may be at much earlier stages of English language learning.
35. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. It is very well planned to provide a broad, balanced and fully inclusive range of opportunities appropriately adapted to meet pupils' specific learning requirements. In addition to pupils' full access to the whole curriculum, a wide range of activities and strategies are provided to enable them to fully benefit from this. These include well-targeted support by teaching assistants in lessons, and flexible arrangements for the withdrawal of pupils for specialist support when needed. Every care is taken to minimise any disruption to learning in subjects. Enrichment is provided through lunch-time activities. Resources are well chosen and used.
36. The school has a good programme to ensure progression from GCSE to work or further education. Pupils value the programme of work experience in Year 11 and guidance within the school's careers provision is good.
37. The curriculum is reviewed regularly and all staff have the opportunity to be involved in these discussions. There have been significant developments in vocational provision and the school focus on developing teaching and learning strategies is evident across the curriculum and is leading to improvements in standards.
38. The school enrichment programme is very good across sport and the arts. It is enhanced further by field trips and residential experiences. The school uses a wide range and number of outside speakers to enhance learning.
39. Across the school there are weaknesses in accommodation and resources. The school library is very conducive to learning and is well run but the number of books on the shelves is limited. Many classrooms are poorly decorated. The toilets need renovation. The dining room is small for the numbers of pupils it has to accommodate. There is a shortage of computers in many curriculum areas. Teachers and pupils are well supported by classroom assistants, and technical and office staff.

Sixth form

The curriculum provision for sixth formers is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of academic courses.
- Opportunities for community and cultural activities are good.
- Vocational provision is limited.
- The common-room is too small.

Commentary

40. There is a good range of academic courses and a number of popular vocational courses which meet the requirements of some but not all potential students. The school is well aware of the need to broaden this provision when finances allow. There are opportunities for students to resit GCSE mathematics and English in order to improve their grades. The school encourages students through its liberal studies programme to be involved in a range of community and cultural activities.
41. There is no timetabled physical education programme or programme of general studies which would help to enrich the sixth form experience. Key skills provision is centred on ICT. The sixth form common room is far too small for the numbers it has to accommodate.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care is **good** and for support and guidance is **very good**.

Main strengths

- The pastoral team focus effectively on academic as well as pastoral monitoring and support.
- The school is committed to raising attainment through academic mentoring of all pupils.
- Arrangements for pupils' care are good.
- The school council enables pupils' views to be heard.

Commentary

42. The school has an effective and dynamic pastoral team of heads of year led by assistant heads for the upper and lower schools. Relationships are good and pupils are confident that there is always someone they can turn to if they have difficulties. Electronic monitoring of attendance, homework, equipment and progress towards targets enables pastoral staff to pick up problems and to take appropriate action. There are good procedures for facilitating communication between academic and pastoral staff on a range of issues. Good induction arrangements help new pupils to settle in well and there are good procedures for preparing them for their Year 10 options. There is a very good range of strategies for helping those who have behavioural or other difficulties. A good reward system helps to motivate pupils and to celebrate their successes.
43. It is too early to evaluate the new mentoring scheme which only started at the beginning of term. Pupils and staff are being carefully prepared in order that they can make the most of the six mentoring sessions which all pupils will have in the course of the year. Monitoring procedures are in place in order that the school can evaluate and, if necessary, improve the scheme. The scheme is based on a philosophy that puts pupils at the centre of the learning process by encouraging them to reflect on their progress and to select targets for improving this. The target-setting culture which exists within the school is helping pupils to become knowledgeable and reflective about their learning. The mentoring programme builds on this and three consultation days will replace parents' consultation evenings. Many parents made the comment about parents' consultation evenings that form tutors do not have specific subject information to properly interpret the electronically provided information on their children's progress. Inspection evidence supports these views. Many targets chosen by pupils are not specific enough to be helpful. For target setting to become fully effective there needs to be a

manageable system of communicating relevant information amongst all those concerned: the pupil, the mentor, the subject teacher and parents.

44. There are effective child protection arrangements and staff are fully aware of these. Health and safety procedures have been greatly improved since the time of the last inspection. A recent health and safety report carried out by the local authority comments very favourably on the school's pro-active approach to health and safety. There is very good care and support for pupils with physical disabilities. Although there are good arrangements for dealing with accidents, the recording procedures for minor accidents provide insufficient information for them to be properly monitored. Arrangements for looking after sick pupils are satisfactory although they have to wait to be collected from a busy resources room.
45. The school provides opportunities for pupils to put forward their views through the school council. The school council varies in its effectiveness from year to year but pupils' views do have influence in the school; for example they helped to choose the catering company responsible for school meals. During the inspection form tutor groups were involved in a democratic exercise to select issues for their form representatives to put before the school council and did this in a thoughtful and mature fashion. Issues raised include lockers, food and litter, but pupils also raise issues relating to learning such as behaviour and rewards.
46. All pupils have access to individual advice and information about careers. The Connexions service link has been overstretched and consequently this aspect of careers education has not been so strong. However, the careers section in the library has improved. Pupils enjoy a valuable work experience programme. Year 11 pupils had just returned from this prior to the inspection. They were usefully evaluating what they had learnt and completing their diaries. Many had been offered jobs. This is strong evidence of their good attitudes, and they were writing letters of thanks to their employers. There are a number of other fruitful initiatives that benefit careers education such as the visits of local business people to hold 'mock' interviews with pupils.
47. The school works effectively to ensure that pupils are suitably prepared for transition at all stages, not only for employment but also for GCSE choices, the sixth form, and for further and higher education. It also works hard to ensure that all opportunities are inclusive and this is a very good feature of the curriculum. Pupils with physical illness and disability are very well integrated, and the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The work of the learning development department in occasionally withdrawing pupils for support with literacy so that they can prepare them as swiftly as possible for re-integration and full access to the curriculum is very good. As well as coaching these pupils in the basic skills they also boost their confidence well through sympathetic teaching. Their learning needs are extremely well known from the time they enter the school, and their progress and academic and personal development are very closely monitored.

Sixth form

Students are provided with **good** support and guidance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students value the helpfulness of their teachers.
- Overall, induction arrangements are good.
- Students are given good advice on university entrance but at the time of the inspection do not receive sufficient specialist careers advice.

Commentary

48. Students value the good relationships they have with their teachers and all agree about their helpfulness. They agree that the school helps them to settle into the sixth form well. There is a

good induction programme which focuses on skills such as management of work and time. Surveys show that a large majority of students are happy with their selection of courses and the low drop-out rate reflects this. However, many students said that they felt they were not sufficiently prepared for the gap between GCSE and A-levels and were not made aware of the difficulties of some subjects.

49. The guidance which the school provides on university entrance is very good. However, students are not well advised about options other than university. Students have access to good careers information in the library and there are well-organised interview days for Year 12 students when local employers provide useful practice and guidance in interview techniques. However, at the time of the inspection, students have insufficient access to specialist careers advice as there is only one Connexions advisor for the whole school. The recent appointment of a Connexions advisor for the sixth form should provide much better careers provision.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **unsatisfactory**. The school has **sound** links with the community and **good** links with feeder schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents express strong support for most aspects of the school's work and are very positive about the sixth form.
- Parents are provided with insufficient information about their children's progress and the quality of annual reports on progress is poor across the school.
- The quality of communication with parents is variable.
- Links with other schools, including the improving links with primary schools, make an effective contribution to the school and to pupils' learning.

Commentary

50. Liaison with primary schools has greatly improved. Meetings between primary school headteachers and school staff, the sharing of practice in some subjects and the introduction of transition units are all helping to improve continuity of the curriculum for pupils. Parents agree that good transition arrangements help their children settle in quickly and well. Other good links with schools and colleges include a research link with Warwick University, and membership of the Warwickshire Inclusion Network, a group of schools working on improving teaching and learning styles. The school is a partnership promotion school for initial teacher training.
51. The school has a deservedly high reputation in the community and is over-subscribed. Less than a quarter of parents returned the parents' questionnaire but responses show a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school's work.
52. Of those parents who returned the questionnaire a quarter said they do not feel the school keeps them well informed about how their child is getting on and two thirds were satisfied with the information they receive. The inspection team received numerous letters and notes revealing parents' concern about the quality of reports and the usefulness of consultation evenings with form tutors. Several parents made the comment that they do not feel that the school values the contribution they can make to their children's education. Inspection findings support parents' concerns.
53. The school points out that there are logistical and other problems with consultation evenings with subject teachers, that many parents are satisfied with the less pressured and more frequent consultations with the form tutor and that there is a high attendance rate at parents' evenings. However, form tutors do not have access to the subject information which would enable them to interpret the statistical progress reports which form the basis of consultations.

There is at present no way of making parents aware of the specific targets their children have in different subjects, and targets which children set themselves often say no more than "I must work harder". Although the school invited comments from parents about the new mentoring they did not use a questionnaire to elicit their views. The school strongly believes that the new mentoring scheme will help pupils to become experts in their own learning and thus help to raise their attainment, and it hopes to convince parents of the benefits of the scheme which has been successful in other schools. The school has plans to monitor this. Over the last few years the school has sampled the views of parents using a national survey document.

54. Annual reports on pupils' progress are of poor quality. They consist of impersonal computer-generated statements describing different National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. Many statements are ungrammatical, misleading or jargon. Parents say that they do not recognise their children in these reports and the inspection fully supports parents' disquiet. In addition, reports do not fulfil statutory requirements as they do not report specifically on religious education and there is no comment included on pupils' general progress.
55. Many aspects of communication with parents are good. Parents agree that they find the school approachable and they value the helpfulness of staff when contacted about individual concerns. There is a good range of informative and well-produced information for parents including the school brochure, booklets and newsletters. Homework planners supply a means of communication between home and school but could be developed further to provide parents with more information. For example, target levels are included in some, but not all, planners, and planners are not used to inform parents when letters are sent home. In order to improve partnership the school needs to consult parents more and make parents feel that they are valued partners in their children's education.
56. A very close partnership is encouraged with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are kept fully informed about their children's progress through the regular exchange of information. They are fully involved in the review of targets on pupils' individual education plans and statements of special educational needs.

Sixth form

There are **satisfactory** links with other schools and colleges. Links with parents are **unsatisfactory**.

Parents are pleased with the sixth form but would appreciate reports which explained clearly how their children were achieving and what they could do to support them. Reports do not give enough information about students' progress. Students have good access to computers but space for private study is limited. Students feel that the school responds well to their needs and are complimentary about the quality of teaching. Most students feel the school is responsive to their needs and listens to their views. They feel the sixth form works well.

The school's links with neighbouring schools and colleges are satisfactory although there have been limited developments in sharing teacher expertise and establishing joint curriculum provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the quality of leadership and management is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and a strong team of senior managers are very clear in their focus on raising standards and improving pupils' and students' achievements.
- Most heads of subject departments and pastoral leaders share this vision and are very effective managers.
- The school is very sharp at analysing its performance and innovative in finding ways of improving.

- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.
- Staff have benefited greatly from clearly focused and well-established performance management.
- Financial management is very good.
- Best practice is not yet equally established in every subject department.
- The governing body has not fulfilled its obligation to ensure that religious education and citizenship are given enough time on the curriculum.

Commentary

57. The headteacher and his energetic team of senior managers share a very clear vision for the school. This vision is based on the conviction that professional staff and pupils and students alike flourish best when they take full responsibility for their own performance and their own learning. Over the past few years subject leaders and staff have become much more effective at accounting for how well pupils and students are doing in their subjects and taking action to ensure that they perform even better in the future. This answers the key reservation in the previous inspection that middle managers did not take enough responsibility for raising achievement. The careful setting of targets for individual pupils and students and the new system of helping them improve through mentoring are just two of the initiatives the school has taken to help maintain and improve standards. The success of these initiatives and the effectiveness of the school's management can be measured in its receipt in 2002 of a School Achievement Award for the strong improvement in pupils' and students' performances. This has been sustained in 2003.
58. One of the main engines of this improvement has been the school's relentless focus on the professional development of its staff. At the heart of its very effective performance management, for example, is the acceptance by all teachers of the ambitious aim to improve pupils' National Curriculum levels by an average of two levels over each stage from 11 to 14 and 14 to 16. The school's careful evaluation of its data shows that it has been largely successful in this aim and that pupils' progress is better than the national average. Regular 'coaching' involving discussion and observation of teaching is well embedded in the practice of most departments, although this needs eventually to be accepted by all staff. The newly established professional enquiry groups allow all teaching staff to deepen their thinking on important teaching questions. The school's participation with Warwick University in an initiative called *Get Real @ Ashlawn* is beginning to give pupils – some of them identified as being at risk of being excluded – good opportunities of exploring how they learn best and of influencing staff in how they go about teaching them. All these approaches are the fruit of very innovative thinking and good delegation so that everyone is responsible for the process of learning.
59. The governing body encourages and supports the headteacher and senior staff. It is effective at holding the school to account, especially in its financial performance, although it does not sufficiently challenge the senior management on major changes to school practices. Through involvement in departmental reviews governors are increasing their grasp of curricular matters. However, the governing body is not fulfilling its obligation to ensure that enough time is set aside for the teaching of religious education and citizenship.
60. Provision for special educational needs is very well led and managed. Systems and procedures are highly efficient and effective. Teachers and teaching assistants are very well supported and guided. Very effective liaison systems operate to ensure the close monitoring and support of pupils' personal and academic development from the time they enter the school. Systems for communication are very well devised and effective in ensuring consistency of provision across the school. The statutory requirements for the annual review of statements are fully met. Accommodation is attractive and provides a positive and welcoming learning environment which is valued by pupils. Resources are very carefully chosen and well used to support learning. Very good progress since the last inspection has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of provision.

61. Financial management is very good. The school works hard to ensure that funds are targeted on improving standards. The governors' finance committee meets regularly to monitor spending. All issues from the last audit report have been addressed and the school has good systems for checking expenditure. All monies are used for their intended purposes. The bursar is part of the school's senior management team and is well aware of the school's priorities for development. The school applies the principles of best value very well. The monies it receives for each pupil are below the national average.

Sixth form

Leadership and management are **very good**.

Commentary

62. There is a very clear direction for the development of the sixth form set by the headteacher, the senior team and governors. The head of the sixth form has a very good knowledge of curriculum developments and the progress students are making. He is very well supported by the sixth form tutors who have the trust and confidence of the students. Daily administrative systems and procedures work well. Students are well known individually and receive very good personal support. They are encouraged to take responsibility and are treated by their teachers as maturing young adults. Many take an active part in working with younger pupils. Students from all ethnic groups and religious backgrounds work harmoniously. Relationships amongst students and between staff and students are very good.

63. Although the sixth form is cost effective overall there are some very small teaching groups which are subsidised by large groups in vocational subjects. The school needs to work with other local providers of sixth form education to extend the range of vocational and academic courses and to ensure all courses are cost effective.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,944,082
Total expenditure	3,768,500
Expenditure per pupil	2,658

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	173,036
Balance carried forward to the next	175,582

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision for English is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved in the last two years partly because of the strength of leadership and management.
- Some teaching is outstanding.
- Standards of behaviour and pupils' attitudes to the subject are good.
- High attaining pupils are not always stretched enough.
- Some teaching is too slow and does not sufficiently challenge pupils.
- Teachers do not yet make full enough use of assessment data.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Commentary

64. Standards in English have been improving steadily – faster than nationally. Girls did better than boys in the 2002 national tests taken at the end of Year 9, but by less than the national margin. A small number of pupils attained the highest levels. In 2003 results again improved and were 12 per cent better than in the previous year. The gap between girls and boys narrowed. Standards in the present Year 9 are well above average. Overall achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is very good.
65. In 2002, results at grades A*-C in English and English literature were average and better in both subjects than in the previous year. Results at A*-G were above average indicating that pupils with learning difficulties and lower attainers are doing well. The proportion of pupils reaching the highest grades at GCSE was well below average in line with national test results two years earlier. Results improved in 2003 especially in English literature.
66. Standards in the present Year 11 are above average representing good achievement for the group who were average in national tests two years earlier.
67. Pupils generally have very good oral skills. They enjoy discussing ideas in pairs and develop confidence in formal presentation. They listen well to others. Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are better than national standards. Higher attainers write at length with flair and sensitivity. Pupils can sift and categorise ideas to make useful notes. They learn to look closely at texts to examine how language is used to create effect.

68. Overall teaching is good but is not all equally strong. Some teaching is excellent although a small proportion is not satisfactory. In the best lessons pupils are encouraged to express their own views and to take responsibility for their learning. The classroom atmosphere is very positive and enthusiastic and pupils' response is excellent. Many pupils derive great pleasure from the progress they have made. In these lessons achievement is very high. Most teaching is based on good knowledge of the subject, carefully structured and planned lessons, and good relationships. Questioning is challenging so pupils make good progress. Work is accurately assessed and pupils know how well they are doing. The best marking is detailed and constructive but a small amount is brief and unhelpful. Analysis of assessment data to fix targets for pupils is very sophisticated though teachers do not routinely use the information to identify and then support pupils who are not making sufficient progress. Where teaching is less successful, pace is slow, and content is dull, so pupils, in particular high attaining pupils, are not sufficiently challenged. Some lessons are so dominated by the teacher that pupils have little opportunity to express their ideas.
69. The head of department provides powerful intellectual leadership for the department. He works hard to improve teaching by checking lessons and providing support and advice where necessary. Pupils' work is also checked. Development planning is very good and curriculum planning excellent. The department has successfully focused its efforts on raising the achievement of middle attaining pupils, though this has resulted in some underachievement among higher attaining groups. The sharing of teaching groups is not always successful in promoting continuity in learning. The department would benefit from teachers being able to learn from each other by observing lessons.
70. Since the last inspection standards have improved at the end of Year 9. They declined at GCSE but are now improving. There has been some improvement in teaching although some lessons are still too teacher-dominated. Curriculum planning, leadership, and management are now stronger.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

Standards of literacy are above average. Many pupils have very good oral skills. There is opportunity for discussion and evaluation in English, music and modern foreign languages. The emphasis placed on literacy across the curriculum varies but is well established in English in Years 7, 8 and 9. There is good practice in science and in design and technology.

Modern foreign languages

Overall, provision in modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils were entered for French or German at GCSE in 2002 and all achieved a pass grade. Standards are rising.
- Much of the teaching of both languages is of a very high standard and many pupils learn well as a result.
- The department is very effective at helping pupils improve their work by setting them clear targets.
- Standards in Year 11 and results at GCSE are still too low.
- A significant amount of teaching lacks challenge and as a result too many pupils underachieve, including higher attainers.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

71. The modern foreign languages department has suffered in recent years from disruptions in staffing which have taken their toll on the morale and achievement of a number of pupils. Some good new appointments and very efficient management by the head of department have begun to reverse this trend so that standards, although still too low in Year 11, are beginning to rise. At the time of the inspection, however, the head of department was absent and a significant number of pupils were receiving teaching that was unsatisfactory. So far too little has been done to check and improve the quality of this teaching.
72. In 2002 GCSE French results at grades A*-C were well below the national average. They were better than in the previous year, however, and results in 2003 continued the upward trend. Results in German have also improved and in 2002 they were similar to the national average. Most pupils were entered for a foreign language and those of lower attainment achieved satisfactorily by obtaining at least grade G. In both languages, however, many pupils did less well than in their other subjects.
73. Standards in Year 9 are in line with the national average in French and the majority of pupils are achieving satisfactorily. The smaller number of higher attaining pupils learning German are reaching higher standards, but they are not achieving as well because the teaching they receive does not expect enough from them. The same pupils are achieving higher standards of speaking and writing in French, especially girls. Teaching at that level is very strong and many pupils speak confidently with good pronunciation. Overall, pupils are better at listening than in the other skills because they hear the foreign language well spoken in the classroom. In Year 11 standards are below average in French and slightly above in German. However, at this level there is a significant amount of underachievement in both languages. This is caused partly by disrupted teaching in the past and partly by unchallenging teaching now. As a result, many pupils cannot speak with any confidence in the language and too many have very English-sounding pronunciation that is unchecked. Pupils with learning needs in smaller sets achieve satisfactorily, as do pupils with English as an additional language who work hard and have very positive attitudes.
74. There are large differences in the quality of teaching and learning. At its best teaching is very good, even excellent, and makes high but reasonable demands of pupils. Teachers mostly have very good command of their languages. The foreign language is used nearly all the time and pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise their French or German through repetition and pair work. When this happens pupils make unusually strong progress and learn to speak with real confidence. By contrast, however, a minority of teaching does not promote enough learning. In German this is partly because there are insufficient German specialists and partly because the teaching sometimes lacks a challenging edge so that capable pupils are not pushed hard enough. In French a number of pupils are learning too little because unqualified or inexperienced teaching does not give them opportunities of developing their spoken language. Marking lacks rigour in some cases and fails to insist on correction so that pupils do not

improve fast enough in the accuracy of their written work. Time is occasionally wasted at the end of the long lesson because pupils are restless.

75. There are many aspects of the department's work that are strong and bode well for its potential to improve. The very good analysis and evaluation of data; the careful setting of targets to help pupils know how they can improve; the excellent documentation; the regular use of ICT; the organising of trips to France and Germany; the frequent discussion of good practice – all these benefit pupils greatly and describe a well-run department that is united and vigorous enough to move forward once the current situation is resolved. Most of the reservations in the previous inspection report no longer apply, although standards overall have not risen. In the short term, however, the department has not yet dealt with the inadequate teaching which is causing too much underachievement.

MATHEMATICS

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and the management of the department are very good.
- The assessment of pupils and the use of assessment data to track pupils' progress are very good.
- Good overall teaching leads to good pupil achievement.
- There are good teacher-pupil relationships and this leads to positive attitudes.
- In some 75-minute lessons time is used ineffectively.
- There is a need to raise the standards of some teaching to those of the best.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Commentary

76. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average. In 2002 the results of national examinations at the end of Year 9 were well above average. The 2002 GCSE results at the end of Year 11 were average, with boys doing significantly better than girls. Results at GCSE are getting better; this is an improving department. The results of girls in the 2002 GCSE examination represented a dip in this trend, but the results in 2003 were an improvement on the 2002 examinations and were more in line with the results of the past few years. The long-term improvement in GCSE results represents good progress since the previous inspection.
77. Boys have generally performed slightly better than girls at the end of Year 9 but the gap has usually disappeared by the end of Year 11 except in the 2002 GCSE results. Work seen in class is above average and there are some very good examples of coursework, where pupils demonstrate an impressive understanding of algebra. Achievement over the whole school is good, but it is best over the first three years, where pupils make especially good gains in numerical and some algebraic skills.

78. Teaching and learning are good, although there are inconsistencies. The best lessons challenge pupils, set high expectations and demonstrate good teacher-pupil relationships. These lessons are split effectively into well-designed numeracy starters and well-planned main sessions, using a variety of teaching styles, such as group work and discussion. As a result, pupils become engaged, their attitudes are positive, they work hard in lessons and they make very good progress. In the rare lessons where there is a lack of focus and teaching objectives are insufficiently clear, pupils become disengaged and lose interest, leading to unsatisfactory attitudes and inadequate learning. Some 75-minute lessons are not as productive as they should be. The department has made good progress in developing strategies for teaching for such periods but in a few lessons tasks do not stretch pupils as much as they should. Many pupils find concentration over these long sessions difficult to maintain.
79. Although there is a variation in teaching, overall it is good and effective and all pupils learn well over their five years in the school. Ethnic minority pupils achieve as well as other pupils. Low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are often helped by effective learning support assistants. High attaining pupils are suitably challenged by the work they are given, an improvement on the previous report which highlighted a lack of challenge for such pupils. The curriculum is effectively enriched with the provision of various classes every Wednesday morning, before school starts, enabling pupils to supplement their normal mathematics lessons with extra ones, in some cases leading to extra GCSE qualifications. Homework is set and marked appropriately. Key words of the subject are displayed on many classroom walls but there needs to be more emphasis on using them in lessons.
80. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Following some staffing problems the department is now a strong team with good subject knowledge. The use of assessment data to track pupils, to set appropriate subject-based targets and to identify underachievement is very good. The head of department has a clear vision and an ambition to raise standards, with some innovative ideas on teaching that have yet fully to take effect. Documentation is very well written and priorities for development are appropriate. Teaching is monitored effectively although the strategies used to spread best practice amongst the staff need further development. The large size of the department makes this difficult to achieve although there is effective liaison between those teachers who share the teaching of many classes in Years 7 to 9.

Numeracy across the curriculum

81. Numeracy skills are, in general, well taught across the curriculum and standards are above average. This is an improvement on the previous inspection where this issue was highlighted as a weakness. Recent staff development has resulted in a policy that addresses cross-curricular numeracy. The effective use of numeracy is best in science, where there is much very good practice. Here, younger pupils accurately calculate areas and volumes and plot graphs showing planetary motion. Older pupils respond well to demanding tasks and construct force diagrams and understand various graphs relating to distance-speed-time.

SCIENCE

Overall the quality of provision for science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in lessons, in tests and examinations are well above average.
- There is very good and often excellent teaching that leads to very good learning by pupils.
- Very good leadership helps to develop innovative and interesting teaching so that pupils enjoy science lessons.
- There is very good support for pupils in the form of target setting and analysis of data that leads to improvement in teaching and learning.

- ICT is not used sufficiently and opportunities to learn independently are missed.
- In some lessons expectations and pace are not high enough.
- Biology laboratories are dilapidated and do not facilitate effective learning.
- Sometimes pupils' books are not marked often enough.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

82. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above average and well above average in comparison with pupils' standards on entry. In 2003 results improved and were well above the national average. Results have improved more quickly than in most schools nationally. 2002 GCSE results were also above the national average and when compared with the pupils' Year 9 results indicate good achievement. In 2003 GCSE results were very much better and achievement was very good. Standards in the current Years 10 and 11 are well above average and pupils are achieving very well. Boys and girls do equally well.
83. In a Year 7 lesson about electric circuits, pupils learned to make and justify predictions about the brightness of bulbs and their understanding was well above average. Understanding of the three-dimensional structures of flowers and the functions of their parts, although below average, represented good achievement by pupils including many with special educational needs. In Year 9 pupils enjoyed interesting and demanding teaching about acids and alkalis reaching very high standards of understanding about reactions. Demanding numerical work about electricity and forces and acceleration produced understanding that was well above average and pupils' numerical skills were very good. Pupils from all ethnic groups do equally well.
84. Achievement in a Year 11 lesson about digital signals was excellent because the teacher's planning was excellent and the lesson was very demanding. When pupils' interest in science was low and teachers did not insist strongly enough on attention and work pupils' achievements were only satisfactory. In most lessons in all year groups achievement is very good because high standards are expected and teaching is demanding.
85. Teaching is very good at fostering very good relationships in lesson; pupils are regularly encouraged and given credit for their efforts and ideas and consequently they are very interested in science and learn very well. In Year 10, teachers made very good use of a role-play activity to make science challenging and relevant to pupils' lives; as a result learning and social skills were very good. Skilful use of models of chemical bonds ensured that pupils, including those with special educational needs, made very good progress whilst also improving their writing skills. Demanding questioning is often used and in Year 11 pupils are presented with paradoxes to improve their understanding of light. In these lessons the achievements of high attaining pupils were excellent and overall they are very good. Investigative work about light-dependent resistors is well planned and very clearly explained so that pupils' learning of investigative skills is very good. In a minority of lessons expectations are not high enough and pupils are not given deadlines; as a result less is learned. They are not given credit for their

efforts or explanations are unclear and pupils are not sure what to do. Some pupils, particularly boys, can be slow to start work and teachers do not always insist that they do so.

86. Management of the department is very good. Records of marks from tests and written work are very detailed and thorough analysis provides targets and identifies pupils who need support; as a result standards in tests, examinations and lessons are rising. Monitoring and development of teaching are done very well and teaching methods provide many opportunities for pupils to learn independently. Leadership is very good because teachers are very well informed about teaching methods and their plans are very good. Plans include using data loggers but overall ICT is not used often enough because there is not enough modern equipment. Workbooks provide very good preparation for examinations and most books are marked regularly although a minority are not. There have been improvements since the last inspection in standards and achievement and teaching is now very good. There are some biology laboratories which are dilapidated and do not encourage learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality departmental management is now in place.
- The National Strategy in Years 7 to 9 is beginning to raise standards.
- Higher attainers are underachieving.
- Teachers do not always manage time effectively.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of Teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Good	
Management of the subject	Good	
Progress since the previous inspection	Good	

Commentary

87. Teacher assessments in 2002 indicated Year 9 pupils' standards were above average. Standards of work examined, however, suggest the assessments were inflated. Standards were average in 2003. Results in the 2002 and 2003 GNVQ examination at the end of Year 11 were average, which represents satisfactory achievement.
88. Pupils in Year 9 can create forms to collect data about cinema clients to input to a database. They do not structure the data to allow the creation of a report about various choices of film. They use a spreadsheet to calculate income from a sponsored swim, but do not create graphs to show how much profit was made. The National Strategy introduced in September 2003 is now helping to improve the level of pupils' work.
89. Pupils in Year 11 are confident in using software for a range of activities. They use sophisticated graphics software to design a bookmark. They are not able to clearly explain why a particular piece of software is more suitable for enlarging graphics. They create relationships in a database without examples of how they are used. Their level of exploration of the impact of ICT is shallow.
90. Pupils of all ethnic backgrounds and those with special educational needs make similar rates of progress. The higher attainers, however, are not given sufficient work to allow them to extend

their knowledge and skills. Teachers involve pupils in assessing their progress, but not in setting targets.

91. In Years 7 to 9 teachers use the National Strategy to set tasks which allow pupils to extend their skills and knowledge. In very good lessons teaching stimulates pupils to a high level of interest. Teachers, however, do not consistently challenge pupils or make full use of time. Practical work is not always defined enough for pupils to successfully complete the tasks.
92. In Years 10 to 11 teachers prepare pupils for the requirements of the examination. In good lessons teachers require full commitment from pupils. Pupils concentrate fully on activities when imaginative teaching styles are used. The depth of challenge too often does not extend the work beyond a superficial level so there are few pupils gaining the higher grades. Homework is set that strengthens what has been learnt in the lesson.
93. Recent staffing difficulties and inadequate management have not helped to raise standards. The new head of department has already created greater stability and recognises the need to improve provision further. He has produced teaching booklets to inform all pupils about targets and how they may be achieved. Classrooms now have word walls and attractive displays. He has recognised the need to develop teaching styles to manage time and pupils more efficiently. The introduction of the National Strategy in Years 7 to 9 is beginning to improve standards. The management of ICT across the school is highly complex and needs to be reviewed.
94. In Years 7 to 9 class sizes and the uneven allocation of time restricts the achievement of some pupils. There is very good and enthusiastic technical support, which teachers could use more effectively in the classroom.
95. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in standards for some pupils in Years 7 to 9, as a result of using more exacting assessment procedures. Standards have also improved in Years 10 to 11. Greater use of ICT in other subjects ensures the school now just meets statutory requirements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

96. Pupils use ICT well in modern foreign languages and there is satisfactory use in most other subjects, although the provision in art and music is limited. The co-ordinator has undertaken an audit of requirements and initiated a programme of departmental support.

HUMANITIES

Geography

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement and progress are good in Years 10 and 11.
- Lessons are well planned and pupils understand clearly what they have to learn.
- Homework tasks are good and help to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- There is good use of data and targets so that pupils are aware of how well they are doing.
- High attainers are not fully extended especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- There are not enough pupil-centred activities so that pupils are given more responsibility for their own learning.
- Analytical skills are poorly developed in GCSE coursework.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good	Good
Management of the subject	Good	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good	Good

Commentary

97. On entry, standards are below average. At the end of Year 9 standards are in line with those found nationally in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding. By Year 11 they are better than national expectations due to more demands being placed on pupils.
98. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are doing better than expected in relation to their capabilities and are making good progress. In Year 7 they can draw maps using scale, whilst in Year 8 they have improved their mapwork skills and are able to draw cross-sections of landscape features using scale and contour lines. By Year 9, they can describe and explain environmental changes and recognise different ways of managing the problems. They can analyse effectively issues such as global warming and population pressure.
99. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are doing better than expected in relation to their capabilities and progress is good. Pupils are encouraged to build on their skills in drawing cross-sections so that they are able to draw more complex sections across isotherm patterns in a typical city and link them to different land uses.
100. Overall teaching is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. In a Year 11 lesson on developing countries, the teacher had the expertise to challenge pupils' answers, resulting in some further thinking and understanding. Lessons are well planned with the setting of clear objectives so that pupils can see what they have to learn. Careful attention is given to the management of time and lessons often have good pace, which maintains the interest of pupils and enables them to make good progress. Teachers use appropriate language suited to the needs of their pupils and particular attention is given to the meaning of geographical terms. There is a respectful relationship amongst teachers and pupils, which has a positive effect on learning. Classroom rules are well established by teachers and understood by pupils. The needs of more able pupils are sometimes not catered for, but this is better in Years 10 and 11. In most lessons teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to work on their own and find answers for themselves. Those with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well as do pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils are aware of how well they are doing as work is marked regularly, although teachers' comments are sometimes directed towards presentational skills rather than understanding of the work in hand. Pupils know their levels of attainment and the targets required to make further progress. Homework is particularly good, extending knowledge and understanding. Pupils are confident with computers but opportunities are often restricted due to pressure on existing resources.
101. The department is well led and managed with clear ideas as to how it should move forward. The process of improvement has begun with the updating of schemes of work to include new and more varied teaching strategies and the redesigning of GCSE coursework so that it is more accessible to pupils. Similarly, work to cater for the needs of different abilities is in its early stages and so requires further work. The development plan has clear objectives and methods but does not include the means to evaluate its level of success. Teaching and learning are monitored so that good practice can be shared within the department. A new assessment policy is in its early stages of development. There is an awareness of

opportunities for literacy, numeracy, citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural themes but they need to be fully integrated into the schemes of work.

102. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Homework is now a worthwhile activity. There are now more textbooks and the department produces more of its own teaching resources to match the requirements of the pupils. There is still insufficient provision for high attainers, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9, although steps have now been taken to cater for their needs.

History

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and helps most pupils to attain above average standards.
- Management and leadership are good and focused on raising standards.
- Most pupils have very positive attitudes which makes a significant contribution to the quality of their learning.
- There is a loss of pace in some lessons due to over-lengthy explanations. Interactions and discussions amongst pupils do not sufficiently capitalise on their good speaking skills.
- The scheme of work does not give clear guidance on teaching cross-curricular themes or planning activities for higher attaining pupils.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good	Good
Management of the subject	Good	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good	Good

Commentary

103. Results at GCSE in 2002 were below the national average at A*-C, due to the relatively poor performance of boys. Girls' results at A*-C were slightly above the national average. All girls entered gained a pass grade. The performance of girls was better than their performance in most other subjects. Boys' performance matched their performance in other subjects and almost all boys gained a pass grade. The performance of ethnic minority pupils matched their performance in other subjects. Results in the most recent examination were better than in 2002 and in line with the above average performance of previous years.

104. The standard attained by a majority of pupils by the age of sixteen is above average. They have good subject knowledge and know how to use historical sources to study the past. Higher attaining pupils write well, evaluating the usefulness of historical sources to explain their interpretation of past events. Lower attaining pupils are weaker at making independent judgements but are able to use sources to describe past events and developments. Most pupils make good progress during Years 10 and 11 and their achievement is good. Good planning for pupils with special needs helps them to develop skills and confidence and achievement is good. Pupils with English as an additional language participate fully in lessons and their achievement is good.

105. The standard on entry of a majority of pupils is at the national average. Most pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9. By the age of fourteen the standard attained by a majority is above average. Good progress is made in the knowledge of the past and the skills of historical enquiry and achievement is good. The standard attained by girls is generally higher than boys, but this is less evident among higher attaining pupils. Lower attaining pupils are weaker at evaluating sources independently but the great majority can organise information to produce structured work. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons and their achievement is good. Good teaching enables pupils with English as an additional language to participate fully in lessons and their achievement is good.
106. The quality of teaching and learning is good and at times very good. Teachers plan purposeful lessons in which the great majority of pupils make progress. Pupils' positive attitudes contribute significantly to the quality of learning. Very good teaching in a Year 9 lesson engaged and kept pupils' interest and they worked with a high level of enthusiasm and concentration. The achievement of these pupils, including those who had English as a second language or with special educational needs, was very good. Good teaching in a Year 11 lesson helped pupils to improve the standard of their work and showed them how to make further improvements. The pace of some lessons is slowed by over-lengthy interventions or explanations by the teacher. Opportunities for pupils to question and challenge each other in whole-class discussions or to give fuller answers to the questions posed are sometimes missed. Hurried conclusions to some lessons prevent effective reinforcement of what has been learned.
107. Assessment of pupils work is good. Homework is regularly set and contributes to pupils' progress. The curriculum enriches pupils' moral and cultural development through the study of topics on racism, social conditions and war and peace. In response to the last report greater use is now made of ICT but there are still difficulties with access to computers.
108. Leadership and management are good and focused on raising standards and improving provision. The scheme of work implements statutory requirements but gives insufficient guidance on planning cross-curricular themes and activities for higher attaining pupils. Teachers are very supportive of each other and the recently appointed head of department receives good professional support from the head of humanities. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the provision of books for pupils in examination groups, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, in visits and courses and opportunities for independent study.

Religious education

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Short-course GCSE results have been above the national average for three years.
- These results represent good achievement and positive attitudes by those pupils who choose to take the examination as they voluntarily undertake 'twilight' sessions and extra work.
- The time given for the study of religious education continues to be insufficient to meet statutory requirements.
- The provision for religious education has improved within these time constraints as there is better continuity and progression than before.
- Reports to parents should include a separate report on the subject.
- More books and better access to ICT facilities are needed.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Insufficient evidence	Above average
Achievement	Insufficient evidence	Good
Teaching and learning	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Commentary

109. The report is based on limited evidence, as there were no religious education lessons during the inspection. Some pupils' work could be seen, mainly from previous years, but not from Year 9, and not enough for secure judgements on standards. The judgements for Year 11 noted above are based on the data for GCSE short-course examinations taken by less than half the pupils each year.
110. Lessons could not be seen because religious education is taught periodically in modules throughout the school's combined course of personal, social and health education, careers, citizenship and religious education. This has improved the continuity of learning for pupils as shown by the good quality of the work that was seen, mainly from Year 7 and Year 10. The work also provided evidence of lively teaching and careful marking. It was clear that pupils had enjoyed their projects on Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism and their achievement in these studies was good.
111. Motivation is clear in the increasing numbers willing to choose to enter for the GCSE short-course in religious education and to undertake the additional work required in order to compensate for the shortage of teaching time. There were 106 candidates in 2003, nearly half of the year group. Results include grades A* and A, indicating that higher attainers are suitably stretched. There is no significant difference between boys and girls, and in 2002 the boys did better than girls in the range of grades A*-C.
112. The provision for religious education continues to be unsatisfactory as there has been insufficient improvement since the last report. The time allocated to the subject continues to be far short of what is needed to meet the requirements of the Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus with the exception of those pupils who undertake the additional work for the short course. Assessment and reporting do not meet requirements although there are plans in hand to redress this. The schemes of work do include attention to all the world religions required by the local syllabus, but there is a lack of depth, particularly in the study of Christianity.
113. Within the constraints of school policy, the subject leaders exploit their opportunities well. This is clear from the good quality curricular planning seen and the high quality of the resources produced in-house to compensate for a lack of books. More books and better access to ICT facilities are needed. There is a strong collaborative approach and good support for the non-specialists on the team.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in graphic products, food technology and resistant materials is above average.
- The quality and effectiveness of key stage managers is good.
- There is good pupil achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Pupils do not have experience in computer-assisted design and manufacture and statutory requirements are not being met.
- There are inadequacies in equipment for resistant materials and ICT facilities in food and textiles technology.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Leadership of the subject		Satisfactory
Management of the subject		Very good
Progress since the previous inspection		Unsatisfactory

Commentary

114. Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are above average. Pupils enter the school with below average skills in design and technology. During the first three years they make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the various disciplines within design and technology and by the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment is slightly above that expected for their age. Design skills are well developed through projects and focused tasks. Pupils working in the resistant materials area benefit from reasonable access to computer equipment. Skills development in food and textiles is good but there is limited use of ICT. Higher attaining pupils produce work that is above the national average. Teachers provide good additional support for those pupils identified with special needs, ensuring that their performance matches that of other groups.
115. Standards achieved by Year 11 GCSE pupils in 2002 were broadly average. Standards were well above average in graphic products and textiles. The 2003 results are above average. Whilst results in textiles and electronic products were below average, those in food were above average and in graphical products and resistant materials well above. The variations in results reflect changes in staffing and the use of non-specialists. Work seen indicates standards are being maintained despite the continuing problem of recruitment of teachers in design and technology. There is no variation in the work of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and many are among the higher attainers. Pupils with special needs are supported effectively through additional teacher time or extended tasks and achieve well.
116. Overall achievement of pupils is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the design processes and apply them well. Pupils are able to explain the brief they are given, recognising the importance of the user of the product. In the lower years pupils have a sound understanding of what influences design and they use their research skills to good effect. The higher attaining pupils pay close attention to detail producing accurate designs, which are usually realised. Overall pupils make good progress.

117. Teaching is good. Most teachers have a good command of the subject and teach to their strengths which ensures good learning for pupils. As a result of teacher commitment and thorough planning the most effective lessons enthuse pupils. Teachers make lesson objectives clear and check understanding frequently through good oral assessment. Assessment systems are very good and consistently applied. Pupils have a good idea of what is required in order to reach the next level in their academic performance because teachers mark regularly and accurately. The majority of teachers are aware of different learning styles and manage to present the work to meet pupils' needs. Expectations are clear. In some less effective lessons too much information is given at one time and pupils' attention wanders. There is a lack of assertiveness to fully control pace and behaviour and this affects the rate of progress.
118. The joint leadership of the department is satisfactory. There is currently no head of subject. The management since the beginning of the academic year has been very good. Considerable effort has gone into ensuring that pupils are not disadvantaged by staffing difficulties. Pupils do not gain experience in computer-aided design and manufacturing. Staff have not been trained to use the available equipment. There is a shortage of hand tools in the resistant materials area which has an impact on progress in lessons. The inadequate amount of technician support and lack of ICT facilities in the food and textiles area place increased demands on staff and affect the quality of presentation and analysis in pupils' work.
119. The subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection when it was judged to be very good although standards have been maintained. The staffing situation has deteriorated, accommodation remains cramped and equipment levels are inadequate. Statutory requirements are not fully met.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected and media studies and drama sampled. In **media studies** one Year 11 lesson was observed. The standard of teaching was good and the quality of work above average. Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

In **drama** three lessons were sampled. Standards in lessons are above average by Year 9. Pupils are achieving well. Teaching and learning in lessons are very good. Pupils enjoy their work. They respond very well to a very good range of activities in the lessons showing interest and involvement in their work. The pace of the lessons is appropriate and pupils explore and learn about different drama techniques through using them in their work. In Year 11, some pupil absence is affecting progress. The teacher works hard with a class which has found it difficult to work cooperatively. This affects both the standard of work achieved and the progress which pupils make. The department is well led and the head of department is anxious to establish an identity for drama within the expressive arts faculty. Not all the teaching staff have experience or expertise in teaching the subject and there are inadequacies with lighting in the performance space.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work and examination results are above average at GCSE.
- Teaching is very good.
- The achievement of pupils at GCSE is very good.
- Pupils do not use sketchbooks in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- ICT is not used.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Good	
Progress since last inspection	Very good	

Commentary

120. The percentage of pupils achieving average standards in 2002 Year 9 assessments was well above the national average. In 2003 the percentage was more in line with the national average. There was a significant increase in the numbers achieving very high standards, mainly girls who outperform boys significantly at this age.
121. Standards of work seen confirm that they are generally in line with the national average. There is a good balance of skill development across both two and three-dimensional media. Most pupils are achieving standards of observational drawing above the national average. Pupils refer to the work of other artists and develop a good understanding of a range of techniques, incorporating some of them successfully into their own work.
122. At GCSE the percentage of pupils gaining an A*-C grade has been consistently well above the national average and continues to improve each year. Girls are outperforming boys more than they do nationally. Pupils perform much better at art than they do in other subjects and in 2003 art was the best performing subject in the school. Standards in lessons seen were above average.
123. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers are well informed and have a good understanding of the specific needs of all pupils. A range of strategies, including setting different levels of work, is used to ensure pupils of all abilities work to their maximum potential.
124. Overall teaching and learning are good in Years 7, 8, and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. All teachers have a good command of the subject and can demonstrate a range of artistic techniques in both two and three-dimensional media. There is a clear emphasis on the development of specific skills such as drawing from observation. All lessons seen were either good or very good and were characterised by thorough planning and clear objectives which were effectively communicated to pupils. They have a balance of whole class instruction and individual support, which ensure pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress. There is very good use of assessment to help pupils understand their specific strengths and weaknesses and clear targets for improvement are given after the completion of individual pieces of work.
125. Leadership of the department is very good. The newly appointed head of department has a strong commitment and vision of how the subject should be taught and is focused on raising standards. Management of the department is good. There is awareness of both the department's strengths and its few weaknesses. Documentation is very comprehensive and thorough. Schemes of work are revised regularly to meet both syllabus change and the needs of pupils.
126. The newly qualified teacher is well supported and good teamwork is evident throughout the department. Lack of resources sometimes prevents attendance on external courses; however, professional development needs are generally met internally. The recently established

management coaching initiative is working well, with the head of department benefiting from ongoing support from the head of faculty. Teaching is monitored regularly.

127. There is a good balance of expertise across the staff making two and three-dimensional work possible. Sketchbooks are not used in Years 7, 8, and 9 and this limits both personal expression and experimentation and adversely affects standards. There is no ICT within the department and it is rarely used for either research or making art. No use is made of local or national galleries and neither does the department use such initiatives as artists in schools.
128. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. In the department there is now a better balance of two and three-dimensional work. Standards and examination results and leadership and management have improved. However, investigations using sketchbooks are still not carried out.

Music

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in music are improving and pupils are achieving very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Pupils enjoy music. Their attitudes are very good and they behave very well.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons considerably enhance the work of the department.
- There are insufficient computers for all pupils to use for composition.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good
Quality of learning	Good	Very good
Leadership of the subject		Very good
Management of the subject		Excellent
Progress since the previous inspection		Good

Commentary

129. Standards seen in lessons are above average in Year 9 and Year 11. Teachers' assessments and GCSE results from 2002 bear out this judgement. The GCSE results in 2003 were slightly better than this. Standards in performing, composing and appraising music are well above average. High quality extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons enhance this work. Pupils' achievement by Year 9 is very good particularly as pupils have a mixed experience of music at primary schools. Lower attaining pupils are shown, by the excellent departmental review, not to achieve as well as other pupils. This was observed in lessons although they still achieved satisfactorily. Pupils continue to achieve very well in Years 10 and 11.
130. Such good progress is as a result of very good teaching and learning. In class there are opportunities for pupils to sing, play instruments and appraise their own and others' music. Pupils are prepared well by teachers for both solo and group performances. Teachers give challenging work to pupils of all standards, clearly pitched to suit individuals. Pupils who play instruments are encouraged to use them in class. Teachers help build pupils' confidence when

they play music and sing. They provide many opportunities in class, in extra-curricular activities and at concerts in and out of school. Pupils enjoy listening to each other play and even those who find it difficult to maintain concentration listen very well when this happens. In Year 9 pupils listened attentively to an excellent girl singer who had recently been on the radio. Pupils work together effectively in pairs. Individuals are well advised by the teacher which enables them to make progress. The assessment scheme is excellent and frequently used so that teachers and pupils know it well. Judgements are accurate and related to National Curriculum levels and to GCSE marking schemes so pupils understand their strengths and how to improve. Teachers work hard to establish high standards of behaviour and develop pupils' self-discipline.

131. Pupils speak well and they use language that is appropriate to music. When they appraise music they use the language of assessment conveying an understanding of National Curriculum levels and marking schemes for GCSE.
132. The department is led and managed to a very high standard and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Aspirations and expectations are extremely high and the two teachers work together closely. There are lively extra-curricular activities for pupils to continue to make progress with their work. There are new activities this year including a band containing many young players and a boys' choir. Here boys enjoyed warming up to the GI call and response song and followed this with a very tuneful performance of *Are You Ready for Love?* A boy sang the same song as a solo. This provision is excellent.
133. In Years 7 to 9 the timetable means that music is taught once every two weeks and this is not ideal for developing musical skills especially for the lower attainers in music. Two computers are totally inadequate for pupils to improve their composition and currently the department has no way of making good quality recordings for pupils to hear and save their music. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in teaching leading to higher standards.

Physical education

The provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Relationships with pupils are very good.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good.
- Results at GCSE are improving.
- A range of extra-curricular activities is available to all pupils.
- Pupils in Year 9 who study German do not have sufficient time.
- Accommodation has not improved since the previous inspection.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Commentary

134. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were below average but they have improved in 2003 and have done so over the past three years. Pupils enter the school with a low level of skill and experiences but they achieve satisfactorily. By the end of Year 9 standards vary between the activities taught but are generally in line with those expected. In Year 7 pupils perform good quality sequences in gymnastics by linking rolls, balance and jumps. In Year 9 pupils of low ability demonstrate standards below those expected in hockey and badminton. They increase their knowledge and understanding of these games and achieve well because of good teaching.
135. By the end of Year 11 standards are below those expected in most activities. In GCSE they are average and pupils studying for the short course make satisfactory progress. Standards of written work are average with some pupils showing pride in their work. Standards are in line in football where pupils in Year 10 analyse performance and have good knowledge and understanding of defence and attack. They are in line in dance where pupils in Year 11 plan motifs in groups and demonstrate a sound understanding of simple choreography.
136. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. They are actively involved in lessons and achieve well. High attaining pupils do not always achieve well enough. Pupils' attitudes are positive and they work hard in most lessons. They are enthusiastic and co-operate well in partner and group activities. Behaviour is often good, sometimes very good. It is poor in netball where in one lesson a group of pupils did not co-operate and showed a lack of respect for the teacher. As a result, they made insufficient progress and produced standards below those expected.
137. Teaching is good and results from very good planning and teachers' knowledge. It has improved since the last inspection. Teachers manage classes well and pupils respond to the very good relationships that they have with their teachers. Results in the GCSE course have improved because of good teaching. Teachers mark and assess work regularly so that pupils understand the progress they are making. School teams are successful and many pupils have achieved success at regional and county level. A range of extra-curricular activities is available to all pupils.
138. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is enthusiastic and knowledgeable and all teachers in the department share her enthusiasm. Assessment is good but reports to parents do not record what pupils know, understand and can do. The curriculum is broad and balanced but pupils who study German in Year 9 do not have sufficient time. This has an impact on standards at the end of Year 9. Pupils on the Star 14 programme are withdrawn from their GCSE theory work each week and this has implications for completion of the course.
139. Teaching and resources have improved since the previous inspection but the accommodation continues to be dirty and has not improved.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school provides GNVQ courses in **business, health and social care** and **ICT**.

Details of the **ICT** course are contained in the main body of the **ICT** report. In brief, teaching and learning are satisfactory and standards are average. Pupils are making satisfactory progress.

In **business** one lesson was observed. Standards were average and pupils were making satisfactory progress. Teaching was good.

It was not possible to see the **health and social care** course during the inspection week.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good quality units of work within the combined personal, social, health, careers, citizenship and religious education course which meet some of the National Curriculum Citizenship requirements.
- There are some special events for citizenship within the course which are very effective.
- An assessment and recording system is needed so that teachers and pupils are clear about how well pupils are doing in citizenship.
- The contribution of all subjects to citizenship needs to be mapped and formalised, including a shared responsibility for assessment, as currently there is no evidence that much of the course is being taught.
- Provision for personal, social, health and careers education is very good and is very effectively led and managed.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Achievement	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Teaching and learning	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Commentary

140. The report is based on limited evidence as it was not possible to see any citizenship lessons during the inspection. No pupils' work could be seen, and there was no assessment data. This is an emergent area of work for the school and much still needs to be done.
141. Citizenship is taught in modules as a part of the school's integrated course of personal, social and health education, careers, citizenship and religious education. During the inspection no lessons were being taught. There is good quality planning for topics such as human rights and responsibilities and what makes a good citizen, but there is not enough time to cover all areas of learning about citizenship. The missing areas may well be covered in other subjects but it was not possible to see evidence of this. The school needs to check this. All subjects need to share in developing an effective assessment system so that pupils know how well they are doing so that National Curriculum requirements on reporting can be met.
142. Good quality planning for the delivery of citizenship within the personal development course was seen, and it is clear that there are some strong features linked to special events and visitors to school. These make very effective contributions to pupils' learning about the criminal justice system, and the work of some local voluntary groups. The diversity of religious identities in the United Kingdom is taught well in the religious education section of this course, and the ethnic diversity of the country is celebrated by the school community which is notably harmonious.
143. The school is developing appropriate opportunities for responsible participation in the school and wider community, but needs to record these as part of the assessment of pupils for citizenship. Currently the school's leadership and management of this National Curriculum subject are unsatisfactory.

Personal, social health and careers education

144. This programme is high quality, very well planned and effective. It includes education for sex and relationships in conjunction with lessons in science, and home and family technology. Emotional, practical and ethical aspects are all appropriately addressed. Education on drug and alcohol misuse is also included. A very good lesson was seen with Year 10 on the consequences of drug misuse including the judicious use of a brief and moving film.
145. Teachers choose to be part of this programme and they work closely and collaboratively. They are instilling some rigour to the course and have introduced an assessment scheme with levels of attainment. This results in respect for the course from the pupils and some very good responses. This in turn is leading to good achievement. Teaching is generally lively and interactive so that pupils learn about issues but also relate them to their own lives and experiences through discussion and reflection. Many good quality resources have been made in-house and overall the leadership and management here are very good.
146. There are some very strong features to this course including outside links, special events and visitors which all enrich and add to the overall effectiveness of provision. During the inspection the local police team for driver education were presenting modules of seven lessons to Year 11. This is a significant commitment and is making powerful provision for the pupils on issues that may save their lives. The lessons are given in a context of personal responsibility, and making choices that have consequences, all very appropriate to the tone of the school's whole approach to education for personal development. Careers education has been extended across all years, and is of good quality.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 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 tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002 in those subjects and courses where five or more students were entered.

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
English literature	8	87.5	94.4	12.5	37.9	27.5	38.9
Mathematics	6	0.0	74.2	0.0	34.3	0.0	31.3
Biology	9	88.9	81.6	0.0	33.2	26.7	33.2
Chemistry	12	83.3	84.8	33.3	36.9	32.5	35.2
Psychology	6	33.3	83.2	0.0	32.5	13.3	33.6

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
English literature	19	100.0	98.5	42.1	43.7	86.3	84.3
Mathematics	18	88.9	93.3	44.4	52.2	73.3	84.7
Biology	14	78.6	91.6	7.1	36.3	44.3	74.1
Chemistry	16	100.0	94.0	18.8	45.9	65.0	81.1
Physics	12	100.0	92.8	50.0	42.8	85.0	78.6
Information technology VQ	19	86.8	84.3	10.5	24.5	55.3	64.3
Geography	5	100.0	97.1	80.0	40.5	100.0	80.9
History	25	100.0	97.1	28.0	41.0	79.2	81.2
Psychology	19	100.0	94.3	42.1	38.9	74.7	77.7
Design and technology	5	100.0	95.3	20.0	35.5	76.0	76.5
Communication studies (media)	6	100.0	98.3	50.0	36.8	100.0	81.1
Travel and tourism	5	100.0	88.1	40.0	15.7	84.0	61.4
Business	16	93.9	87.1	6.1	16.5	55.2	60.1
Health and social care	6	92.3	90.1	0.0	16.3	60.0	62.5

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

The quality of provision in English literature is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because of very good teaching; some teaching is outstanding.
- Students are very positive about the subject because they feel that they are doing well.
- The work is challenging for students at all levels of attainment.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

Standards	Average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

147. Students make very good progress because teaching is very good – some is outstanding. They are extremely positive about the subject and say they are doing better than they imagined they could. They recognise and value the very high quality teaching. The best lessons are very challenging and students are encouraged to express their own views and be responsible for their learning. Many students are articulate speakers and by exchanging ideas in pairs or groups followed by presentations to the class they increase confidence as well as skills and understanding. There is a strong focus on the close analysis of text and students learn to support their ideas by the use of quotation. Very good knowledge of the subject enables teachers to present it with enthusiasm and energy. Lessons are very carefully structured and planned with a wide repertoire of activities, which sustain interest and pace very well. Tasks are innovative, sustain students' interest, and are designed to ensure that everyone participates. Relationships are very positive and students have to work hard and at some pace. Students have plenty of practice in essay writing, work is accurately assessed, and students have a good idea of the level at which they are working. They know the grades predicted for them and value discussing their work in depth with their teacher. Over the course, students develop higher-order skills such as understanding structure, language, and style in poetry and prose. They are able to consider the writer's style and techniques, for example in the way Ian McEwan engages the reader's attention in the opening chapter of *Enduring Love*. By Year 13 students write quite fluently and demonstrate a good grasp of technical terms.
148. Standards in the 2002 A-level and AS examinations were average. No students attained A grades. Girls did very much better than boys. In 2003 examination results at both levels improved and the proportion of students attaining the highest grades at A-level improved considerably. Standards in the current Year 13 are slightly higher than the previous year and are broadly average. These results represent very good achievement by students who often come into sixth form work with modest GCSE grades.
149. The strong leadership of the subject in the school is replicated in the sixth form. A range of strategies has been introduced to raise standards. Pairs of teachers with an appointed lead teacher teach most groups. They work closely to make sure that the examination syllabus is covered well, and students appreciate the differing teaching styles. Preparation for examinations is thorough but not over-emphasised. Students know the examination assessment scheme and have studied others' writing to see what is required to gain the highest grades. ICT is increasingly being used to support teaching.
150. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The quality of teaching and the curriculum have improved. Assessment is now much more sophisticated.

Modern foreign languages

151. The focus was on German, and French was sampled. In 2002 and 2003, French results at AS and A-level were below average. Current standards are average. Two French lessons were seen, of which one was very good, and one was satisfactory. The teachers' consistent use of their native French contributed well to students' listening skills; however, in Year 12, inefficient use of lesson time restricted some students' overall progress.

German

Overall, the quality of provision in German is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 12 are improving.
- The teacher's fluency in German helps students to develop listening skills well.

- Students' achievement in reading is good.
- Assessment is thorough, and clearly linked to examination criteria.
- Students lack confidence in speaking at length.
- Teaching methods and resources are unimaginative.
- The pace of lessons is generally too slow.
- Joint timetabling often restricts Year 13 students' progress.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

152. In 2002, the one candidate taking A-level German gained an E grade, and achievement was unsatisfactory. In 2003 there were no candidates for A-level German. At AS-level, results in 2002 were below average, all three students performed below their predicted grades, and achievement was unsatisfactory. In 2003, AS results were below average, but students gained results in line with their predicted grades, and achievement improved to satisfactory. In recent years, low numbers of students with mainly average GCSE results have studied German, and no A or B grades have been achieved at AS or A-level.
153. Current standards are below average, but achievement is satisfactory. In Year 13, standards are below average although the two students are working in line with their predicted grades, and their overall achievement is satisfactory. In Year 12, standards are average, and students' achievement is satisfactory overall, with two of the three students working slightly above expectations.
154. Students in both years develop listening skills well, due to the teacher's consistent use of his fluent German; this also results in most students speaking with good German accents. However, many students lack confidence in speaking at length because, in discussions, they are not encouraged to fully develop their responses to the teacher's questions. Achievement in reading is good, due to the challenging texts set for homework, which contain high-order expressions and structures. Additionally, Year 13 students enhance their reading experience independently by using the Internet for information for coursework assignments, for example on the environment. Scrutiny of students' work showed that in writing, most students show sound grammatical accuracy and an adequate active topic-based vocabulary, but they do not routinely redraft corrected language in order to fully absorb the improved language. Most students have good attitudes to learning.
155. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. One very good lesson, one satisfactory and one unsatisfactory lesson were seen. In the unsatisfactory lesson, joint timetabling arrangements resulted in poor learning conditions for Year 13 students. Assessment is good; detailed marking, frequent testing, and target setting linked to examination criteria, give students very good awareness of their learning. However, resources and teaching methods are generally unimaginative, and the slow pace of some lessons often restricts students' progress.
156. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The revised schemes of work, clear departmental planning, and effective use of assessment data, are resulting in gradually improving standards; however, the rate of improvement in standards should now be

accelerated, teaching methods substantially improved and efforts made to increase student numbers. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory overall.

MATHEMATICS

Overall the quality of provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

- Teachers have a strong knowledge of the subject and teach effectively.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Weaknesses in numeracy and algebra hinder long-term progress.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

157. Examination results in A-level mathematics over the last few years have been well below average, although they were below average in 2002. The 2003 A-level results were better than those obtained in 2002. This is an improving department. Standards of work seen in Year 12 are below average especially with regard to routine algebraic skills although they are average in Year 13. Boys did better than girls in 2002. The results of boys and girls at A-level have differed over the last few years but the trend follows no obvious pattern. Historically, more boys than girls have chosen the subject to study.
158. There are students on the A-level mathematics course with modest grades at GCSE, and overall attainment on entry to Year 12 is below average. The examination results obtained at the end of Year 13 have been average. Achievement is satisfactory; indeed, some students achieve well in the subject. The very few students who study further mathematics form too small a group for meaningful statistical comparisons but students achieve at least satisfactorily.
159. Teaching overall at A-level is good. Teachers have strong knowledge of the subject and this enables them to deliver the course effectively. Lessons are well planned, they are paced appropriately for the classes and good relationships between teachers and students allow full participation in lessons. As a result, students are committed, they show positive attitudes, they contribute fully to well-led question and answer sessions and their learning in lessons is good. However, in many cases, students have weak numeracy and uncertain algebraic skills. This restricts the progress of many students as does poor retention of some essential mathematical skills. The marking of regular structured homework is thorough with helpful comments, which correct errors and show students how to improve.
160. Students' attitudes towards A-level mathematics are very positive. Students strongly appreciate the fact that teachers are helpful and readily available outside of lesson time. They appreciate the quality of the modern and relevant textbooks that they use. These positive attitudes are reflected in the very high retention rate for the course.
161. The courses in Years 12 and 13 are well organised with various options being open to students at A-level, including modules on decision mathematics. Students are regularly assessed and the grades obtained are used for the effective setting of targets and monitoring of performance. Overall assessment procedures are very good.

162. The use of mathematics to support work in other A-level courses is satisfactory. There is some very good mathematical work in physics, when students plot and interpret exponential curves.
163. The teaching of GCSE resit groups is satisfactory, allowing students to make reasonable attempts at improving their GCSE grades.

SCIENCE

In the sixth form, students are offered courses in biology, physics and chemistry. The focus of the inspection was on biology but work in chemistry and physics was also sampled

Teaching in **physics** is very good or excellent and standards have risen since 2002 when students gained grades that were comparable with those they obtained in their other subjects. AS-level results were significantly better than expected. In 2003 students did better than predicted and standards in lessons are well above average.

Results in A-level **chemistry** examinations in 2002 were well below the national average and students did less well than expected. In 2003 results were better than predicted and students made good progress. Standards in the one lesson seen were above average and teaching was very good.

Biology

Overall the quality of provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results improved in 2003.
- Marks are recorded thoroughly and used well to set targets for students.
- Lesson planning varies in its effectiveness and sometimes students learn less than they should.
- Expectations are not high enough and the pace of learning is not brisk enough in some lessons.
- ICT is not used often enough and students do not benefit from the opportunities for independent learning that it provides.
- A-level results in 2002 were unsatisfactory although at AS-level they were above the national average.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

164. A-level results in 2002 were well below the national average; students did significantly worse than in their other subjects and achievement was unsatisfactory. AS-level results were better and were above the national average. In 2003 A-level results improved and overall students gained the grades predicted based on their GCSE performance. High achieving students did better than expected but some low achieving students' grades were worse. Progress from Year 11 is now satisfactory.
165. Standards in one Year 13 lesson were well below average and achievement was unsatisfactory because the pace of the lesson was slow and demanded not much more than at GCSE. Some

work about enzymes was not detailed enough for high grades but high standards and very good achievement were evident in work about DNA which was detailed and comprehensive. In Year 13 a group of low attaining students learned about cell division and had difficulties in explaining the purpose of cell division. Their achievement was satisfactory even though their work was equivalent to low A-level grades.

166. Teachers provide good quality information sheets and use questions well to prepare for examinations. Relationships were very good in a lesson about the nitrogen cycle in which students were challenged by a decision making activity so that they worked hard and learned well. A sorting activity about the stages of cell division provided a good opportunity for students to learn independently. The teacher's good planning sympathetically matched the work to the ability of the students but their very low self-confidence limited their learning in spite of the teacher's encouragement. Very clear instructions about a dissection of the kidney ensured that students made good progress but after this the teacher's expectations were too low and students' learning about the kidney's structure was unsatisfactory. Practical work about water potential was well organised but explanations were not clear enough. Diagrams were not used to provide a model of a difficult concept and as a result students were slow to achieve understanding.
167. Records of marks and their analysis are thorough; students are provided with targets and progress towards them is regularly checked. The department knows what to do to improve teaching and is using methods that provide opportunities for independent learning, although the limited pace and demand of teaching restricts students' learning. ICT is not used often enough and students miss these opportunities to take responsibility for their learning.
168. Students' notes, for example about carbohydrates and enzymes, are not well organised and some written accounts of practical work are unfinished. This work has limited use for revision and will make it difficult to achieve high grades in examinations especially as many students lack confidence in their abilities to learn. Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory, results improved last year and teaching methods and support for students are better. There is still room for improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The courses meet the needs of the students.
- Students' have very positive attitudes to their work.
- Good quality management is now beginning to improve standards.
- Examination results have declined in recent years.
- Teaching styles need further development to manage time more effectively.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory
Quality of Teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

169. In 2002 AVCE results in Year 12 were below average at the higher grades, but average overall. In Year 13 results were average at the higher grades but below average overall. This represents satisfactory achievement in comparison with the students' levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form. In 2003 there was a significant drop in standards representing unsatisfactory achievement.
170. Students in Year 12 choose suitable software to create charts to explain the management structure of a company. They identify when the 'chain of command' in a company causes problems and suggest how these might be eliminated. They understand how the use of ICT contributes to success and lucidly explain how to use ICT. They are less precise in writing explanations about functions and positions. When creating logos for companies, students understand the need to consider the visual impact. They explain why certain colours and styles have been used but do not always appreciate how to evaluate the visual impact of differing sizes of logo.
171. Students in Year 13 use a wide range of ICT facilities but not always at an extended level. They search the Internet for information about a specific topic, but most do not show initiative to access more than the given site. They demonstrate how to use ICT to make it easy for a viewer to find their way through a slide presentation on the topic of 'interactivity'. They explain the links between slides in the presentation, but are less sure about the definition of relevant terms. In work on databases, validation routines are included, although no explanation or instances of the effect of validation are given. Students intelligently compare different examples of computer-generated application forms. However, in creating their own, they fail to appreciate the need to allow adequate space to record employment history.
172. Students of all ethnic backgrounds make similar progress. Higher attainers are not provided with extended activities to allow them to achieve higher grades in line with their potential.
173. Teachers take care in preparing lessons with interesting tasks to extend skills and knowledge. They engage students in discussion, although not always sufficiently to ensure students fully understand the topic. The levels of tasks allow students to meet the requirements of the examination syllabus, but do not always extend their understanding and skills. Satisfactory individual assistance is provided on lesson topics and coursework. Teachers do not always make full use of the lesson time and so students do not progress as fully as they might.
174. Staffing difficulties and a lack of direction in management resulted in the drop in standards. The new head of department has recognised this issue and created greater stability among staff. Teaching booklets inform students about targets and how they may be achieved. He has recognised the need to develop teaching styles to make effective use of time. Improved assessment procedures are raising the quality of work.
175. The size of groups in Year 12 prevents good quality support for students who have to complete a significant amount of practical work. There is very good technical support which could be more effectively used by teachers in lesson preparation.
176. This year new schemes of work and student booklets are improving the quality and depth of work in lessons. A more practical approach to assessment is beginning to improve standards. Students have access to a wide range of resources and have a very constructive attitude to their work.

HUMANITIES

The provision for history and psychology was inspected, and geography and religious education were sampled.

In **geography** A-level results have been above average and students do better than expected in relation to their capabilities. In the lesson observed both teaching and learning were satisfactory. Some productive discussion work between teacher and pupil was a notable feature of the lesson.

There is no **religious education** for post-16 students, in contravention of legal requirements.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan purposeful lessons.
- Good support is given to students with special educational needs.
- There is a clear focus on raising standards.
- Results in A2 examinations have improved.
- Students have a positive attitude towards the subject.
- Assessment does not always give clear targets for improvement.
- Opportunities for interchange of students' views in lessons are not always fully exploited.
- Written work is not sufficiently analytical.
- The pace of some lessons is slow.
- The study and organisational skills of some students are weak.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

177. Results at A2 level in 2002 matched the national average. This was an improvement over previous years, due to the improvement in boys' performance. All students entered gained a pass. Girls' performance at the higher grades was better than boys' and matched the national average for these grades. The performance of ethnic minority students was better than the average of the group. Analysis of performance indicates good achievement by students.
178. At AS-level in 2002 girls did better than boys, but overall results were below the national average and many students did not reach their target grades. Generally good performance was depressed by results in one module. Particular attention is now paid to preparing students for this module, including attendance at revision conferences.
179. The standard attained by a majority of students is average. Most have a sound grasp of factual information, taken from source materials. They can identify important factors which help to explain the significance of past events and answers in class show that they understand the connections between causal factors. Whilst some students, especially in Year 12, are confident in expressing their own views in lessons, most have underdeveloped presentational skills. The majority can express their own views clearly in writing but are weaker at weighing evidence and writing in an analytical style with conclusions cogently argued and backed by well-balanced reasons. Girls generally attain a higher standard than boys and employ study skills more effectively. The organisation of some students' work is poor. Clear progress is being made in acquiring subject knowledge and the achievement of most students is satisfactory. Good support for students with special educational needs ensures good achievement.

180. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers' good command of the subject enable them to plan lessons which are, in the main, purposeful, and which extend students' historical knowledge and skills. Students are diligent in lessons and have a positive attitude to the subject. The pace of some lessons is slow and teachers do not always exploit the opportunities for direct interchange of ideas among students. When they do so, as in a good lesson in Year 12 when students had to assess the importance of Martin Luther King in the Black Civil Rights Movement, there is evident development of their speaking and thinking skills. Students' work is regularly assessed and often has helpful comments. Targets for improvement, however, are not always clearly stated.
181. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory with a clear intention to raise standards. Management is satisfactory. Careful analysis of previous performance, review of the curriculum and teaching methods, and attendance at revision conferences are current priorities with the aim of raising standards. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. New curriculum requirements have been implemented and there has been an improvement in textbook resources.

Psychology

Provision for psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average. Students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The subject is very popular. Numbers are increasing rapidly.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	N/A

Commentary

182. GCE A-level results have risen steadily over the last three years and were above average in 2003. The standards seen during the inspection were also above average in both Years 12 and 13. Students, both boys and girls, achieve well overall but more of them could achieve grade A at GCE A-level.
183. Students have good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of psychological research, and are able to compare and evaluate different studies. Year 13 students did this confidently in discussing research into sleep deprivation focusing on the reliability of research, and evaluating environmental and ethical issues. They develop a good understanding of research methods from an early stage as shown by Year 12 students in their work on sex role and body image. They work at a mature level and develop very good independent research skills including the collection and analysis of data.
184. Written work is good. Year 13 research projects set out clear aims and hypotheses, and reflect good understanding of the design and reliability of published research. Argument is often fluent and well supported by reference to relevant case studies and statistical evidence. Essay writing

also develops well by Year 13. Year 12 students are still at a relatively early stage of their course, but nevertheless some are not producing the standards to be expected in terms of well-structured and clearly explained work. In a few instances weaknesses in essay writing continue in Year 13. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are good.

185. Teaching is often creative and imaginative, stimulating students to work at a high level. Students enjoy psychology relishing the challenge and pace, and benefiting from teachers' very good subject knowledge and clear presentations which include the stimulating use of *PowerPoint*. Searching questioning checks and develops understanding, and constant reinforcement helps students to recall key points. Lessons are extremely well planned to provide incrementally greater challenge, and to ensure a thorough grounding in psychological research methodology. Classroom relationships are excellent and powerfully support learning. Students are thoroughly involved throughout, but there a few who do not show an equal commitment in the completion of homework and are underachieving as a result. Students' progress is very closely tracked by thorough marking and very good use of assessment data to measure their achievement. Instances of underachievement are promptly identified and addressed.
186. The teacher in charge of psychology is newly appointed but already her inspiration, vision and enthusiasm are resulting in improving standards, and very high expectations for teaching and learning. Her excellent management skills result in structured support for maximising students' performance, and systematic procedures for the evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching. These now need to be built upon by ensuring that teaching is regularly checked through lesson observation. There is very close teamwork and a shared commitment to improve. The subject is flourishing.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

GCE AS and A-level **product design** was sampled. Attainment is average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good. In 2003 five students exceeded their predicted grades and most students who start the AS course continue their studies at A-level. Students receive good support on the course.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The provision for music and media studies was inspected, and art and theatre studies were sampled.

In **art and design** one Year 12 lesson was observed. The teaching was very good. Standards of work are above average. In **theatre studies** one lesson was sampled and teaching and learning were very good. Students make very good progress.

Music

Overall, the quality of provision for music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because support is well targeted on their development needs.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- More computers are needed to support students' compositions.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

Commentary

187. Standards are above average in both years and students are achieving very well. This is particularly noteworthy in Year 13 where regular assessment and target setting have enabled the one student to improve work by sharply focusing on areas for improvement. This was especially noticeable when observing the student's work in a very good lesson and comparing it to work done during the previous 12 months. This is a strong feature of the whole department and it enables students to know exactly where they are going, how to get there and then get considerable practice to improve. There are too few students taking the examination to reliably compare with national figures. In 2002, three students achieved a B and two D's in the A-level examination. In 2003 both of the students taking the examination achieved a grade higher than expected.
188. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are consistently very good. Lessons have to be, and are, very well planned because both years take turns with taught and study time in the same lesson. Students work very hard in both sections of the lesson. They are very well challenged in all their work throughout the course. Work is thorough and detailed as was evident in a Year 13 lesson on analysis of the second movement of Poulenc's *Flute Sonata*, when teacher and student explored melody, phrasing and structure. The teacher's questioning of the student was searching, allowing her to develop increasing insights into this piece of music. The lesson finished with teacher and student playing the movement. Performance and analysis of music are beneficially linked in this way to deepen understanding. Students' work is thoroughly assessed. Appropriate homework is set regularly.
189. Students' attitudes to music are excellent. They are very committed and think highly of the course. They were well advised about the course before they started and they hold documents which explain what the examination requirements are. They feel they continue to be well supported through the course.
190. The sixth form provision is led well and both teachers work together closely, providing very good role models for the students. The rigorous analysis of information gleaned from results enables the teachers to plan for improving standards. This is excellent and no mere paper exercise as it feeds back into individual students' target setting and helps teachers plan for improvement.
191. Students have to share the computer in and out of study time. Given the very short taught time, it is essential for their success that more computers are available for them to compose their music.

Media studies

The overall provision for media studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are very good.

- Teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Not enough boys are opting to study the subject.
- The range of practical media work is too narrow.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

192. There has been clear improvement in AS examination results over the last few years. At the time of the last inspection the percentage of students achieving an A-C grade at A-level was below the national average. Results in 2001 were well above the national average and in the top five per cent in the country. The number of boys opting to study the subject is very low and generally girls significantly outperform boys, particularly in achieving the highest grades.
193. Standards of work seen are very good. Students' ability to critically analyse the media is well above average. Practical work, although limited to the print media, is also of a very high standard and shows a clear understanding of the codes and conventions used by the media institutions to attract readership.
194. A-level results have consistently been much higher than the national average. Students perform much better in media studies than they do in the other A2 subjects they take. Standards of work seen again confirm that the small number of students are achieving well and reaching standards well above the national average. They can critically analyse a range of media products and can debate current media issues in a mature way using sophisticated media language.
195. The standard of teaching and learning is very good. There is a particularly effective use of group discussion and student interaction. Such teaching approaches are effective in developing a mature understanding of media concepts, which in turn leads to a high level of analytical thinking and the development of a sophisticated media vocabulary. There is good use made of ICT both for teaching and student research.
196. Students' attitude to the subject is excellent. They show very mature learning attitudes and participate fully, drawing maximum advantage from the variety of learning opportunities the course provides. The achievement of all students is very good. They work to their full potential as a result of the constant challenge provided by group discussion and individual tutorial methods.
197. Leadership of the subject is very good. The head of media is strongly committed and conveys enthusiasm for the subject. He leads by example in terms of teaching and learning methods, and has a clear vision based on improving standards and developing resources to cope with the increasing popularity of the subject.
198. Management of the subject is also very good. Documentation is very thorough and includes well-written departmental development and action plans. The teachers work well as a team and this helps overcome lack of specialist expertise in particular areas. Assessment happens naturally within lessons. The marking of students' work is very thorough and provides them with detailed information on how to improve standards of work.
199. Analysis of performance is used to identify key areas for development and the curriculum is regularly reviewed to meet the specific needs of students. A high percentage of students

choose to continue on a media-related course at a higher education institution. The department is aware of the need to develop practical work in using the moving image and to encourage more boys to take the course. There are good quality annual educational visits to media industries on the continent although links to more local media bodies need to be developed as well as harnessing the use of local expertise in the classroom.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The course on travel and tourism was sampled during the inspection and physical education inspected.

In **travel and tourism** the standards are above average. Results in 2002 were very high. Teaching is good and students are interested in their lessons resulting in good learning. Students make good progress in lessons and their achievement is good. Provision for the subject is good.

Physical education

The provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Students achieve well because of very good teachers' knowledge.
- Marking is very good and helps students to understand their progress.
- Students' attitudes to their work are good.
- Relationships between students and their teachers are good.
- There is no enrichment programme in leisure and recreation offered by the department.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

200. Results in the A-level examination in 2002 were just below average with three students taking the examination. One student obtained an A grade. In the lessons observed standards are in line with those found nationally. Where coursework was scrutinised, standards are above the national average and presentation of students' personal exercise programmes is of a high standard. Students use word processing effectively and show pride in their work.

201. Students in Year 13 achieve well. They demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of energy systems in anatomy and physiology and the role of ATP in aerobic exercise. They know that training can improve aerobic capacity and improve fitness. Students discuss and compare the sport and recreation arrangements of those in the USA with those in the United Kingdom and appreciate the 'win at all costs' attitude of Americans. Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge of different training methods and fitness tests. They take responsibility for leading group discussions with confidence. They are making good progress since they started the course. Some have difficulty in retaining information previously learned but they achieve well due to the good teaching and the high level of teachers' subject knowledge. Lesson planning is

comprehensive and targets for improvement are set regularly for the students. Teachers are confident in the use of *PowerPoint* to enhance their presentations. Marking is very good and helps students to know how they are progressing. There are very good relationships amongst students and their teachers and this is a strength of the department. Students' attitudes are good and some make a good contribution to extra-curricular activities in the lower school.

202. Leadership and management of the department are very good and the department makes good use of teachers' expertise. There has been an increase in the numbers of students on the current A-level course and the department is keen to raise standards. There is no enrichment programme provided by the department for students, which would enhance their personal development.

BUSINESS

The focus was on the AVCE business course but the **GNVQ intermediate business course** was also sampled. Students take this course as their main area of study. Many are also involved in retaking English and mathematics GCSE. The work seen indicates average standards. Provisional results for 2003 are in line with the percentage of pass grades achieved nationally. No candidates achieved a merit or distinction award, which is below that expected. Teaching is satisfactory. Students achieve at a satisfactory level.

Overall, the quality of provision in AVCE business is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation of academic progress.
- Good leadership and management of the area and the use of self-evaluation.
- Limited access to ICT and subject specific resources.
- Insufficient textbooks for all students.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

203. The Advanced Vocational Certificate in business was introduced in 2000 with relatively low numbers taking the single award. In 2002 results were broadly as predicted for the four students. The provisional results for 2003 compare favourably with national figures. Four of the ten students exceeded their expected grade and only one student did not gain a grade. Standards of work seen in lessons and in portfolios are average for A-level students. However, given the prior attainment of those on the course, they are making good progress. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls although coursework completion is more of a challenge for boys. Students identified with particular needs and those from different cultural backgrounds perform equally well and some achieve above average results.

204. Achievement is good. Students are able to research effectively, making use of the Internet access available in the sixth form base. Most students demonstrate sound recall of previous work and are able to use this learning to complete their work assignments. Whilst students'

understanding is sound, the level of their analysis and evaluation is considerably weaker. Some find it difficult to explain the subject matter in depth and make less use of technical language. Relationships amongst the students, who at times work in small groups or pairs, are good.

205. Teaching is satisfactory. However, some very good teaching was observed. Specialist teachers have a good business knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. They know their students and generally provide good support. Discussion with students indicates that the efforts made by the teachers are appreciated. Students feel able to seek help whenever it is required. In some lessons the pace is slower than it should be. Work is not sufficiently differentiated and therefore progress is unsatisfactory for students, particularly higher attainers. At times lessons lack variety of activity and students are not given enough responsibility for their learning. Ongoing assessment and guidance on how to improve assignments are good. Programmes show careful planning and comprehensive coverage of the examination content.
206. The leadership and management of vocational education, which includes the AVCE business course, are good. The recently appointed person in charge of business studies is yet to be fully integrated into the management structure. Students' academic progress is well monitored. Regular, accurate assessments ensure that all students have a clear idea of how they are performing and what they need to do to improve. The larger group in Year 12 is not easily accommodated in the existing room and this has an impact on student work rate. There is no dedicated vocational base.
207. The previous report covered the vocational area as a whole. Much has changed since that inspection with new specifications being introduced. Standards are improving in 2003 indicating a positive trend. Accommodation was an issue then and remains so. Overall progress has been satisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

AVCE health and social care was sampled. In 2002 results were at the national average. In the lesson observed teaching and learning were good and students were achieving well.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

There is a very good quality programme for **personal, social and health education** for all post-16 students offering relevant guidance for their age and needs. It is planned to meet the requirements of an AS examination in citizenship and social science so that students can be accredited for their work. This is a new venture and extends students' opportunities for gaining a qualification. In the lessons seen, students were studying aspects of parenting and personal health issues. The lessons were lively and challenging and students were thoroughly involved in the opportunities for discussion and debate. The lessons include appropriate careers guidance and higher education guidance. The support that the Connexions service has been able to offer has been reduced nevertheless students do benefit from special days when they are taught about interviewing.

Students are given the opportunity in liberal studies to pursue on their own a variety of sporting, cultural and community based activities. Many students appreciated these opportunities.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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