

INSPECTION REPORT

CASTLE MANOR COMMUNITY UPPER SCHOOL

Haverhill

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124788

Headteacher: Ms M Vigar

Lead inspector: John Carnaghan

Dates of inspection: 1st - 4th March 2004

Inspection number: 259405

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of students: | 13 to 18 years |
| Gender of students: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 476 |
| School address: | Eastern Avenue Haverhill Suffolk |
| Postcode: | CB9 9JE |
| Telephone number: | 01440 705501 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr A Pearson |
| Date of previous inspection: | 22 nd September 1997 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Castle Manor Community School is a small 13 to 18 comprehensive school serving part of the town of Haverhill. The area it serves has greater deprivation than average. The school had a temporary headteacher in 2002-03 and the present head has been in post for six months. The standards of students as they enter the school in Year 9 are well below average. The numbers who take free school meals is average. Very few students are from ethnic minority backgrounds and none is at an early stage of speaking English. There are very small numbers of looked-after children, and no refugees or travellers. The proportion of students with special educational needs is average and there are less than usual numbers of those with Statements of Special Educational Need. The number of students who join or leave the school at other than the start of the academic year is very low. The Sixth Form is run in a consortium with a neighbouring school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1352 | John Carnaghan | <i>Lead inspector</i> | |
| 13762 | Norman Shelley | <i>Lay inspector</i> | |
| 25377 | Lorna Brown | <i>Team inspector</i> | Art and design. |
| 4720 | Graham Carter | <i>Team inspector</i> | Science; Biology Sixth Form. |
| 2628 | Allan Edwards | <i>Team inspector</i> | Physical education; Physical education Sixth Form. |
| 8501 | Paul Hartwright | <i>Team inspector</i> | Design and technology. |
| 4451 | Roger Howarth | <i>Team inspector</i> | Citizenship; Geography; Religious education. |
| 3643 | Derek Jones | <i>Team inspector</i> | Mathematics Sixth Form. |
| 30699 | Arthur Kemp | <i>Team inspector</i> | Mathematics. |
| 29605 | John Nicholls | <i>Team inspector</i> | Modern foreign languages. |
| 8360 | Frederick Peacock | <i>Team inspector</i> | Music; Special educational needs. |
| 31191 | David Sylph | <i>Team inspector</i> | History. |
| 31096 | John Thornhill | <i>Team inspector</i> | Information and communications technology; Information and communications technology Sixth Form. |
| 4486 | Michael Weller | <i>Team inspector</i> | English; English Sixth Form; English as an additional language. |
| 20825 | Brian Ogden | <i>Team inspector</i> | Travel and tourism Sixth Form. |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Castle Manor Community Upper School provides a satisfactory standard of education. It is being transformed by impressive improvements introduced by the new headteacher. Students' standards are improving, becoming closer to the national average than previously. Achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and good in the Sixth Form. However, teaching in Year 9 is unsatisfactory, largely due to weaknesses in managing behaviour. The leadership of the school is very good, focusing on raising expectations and improving standards. Management is satisfactory; the way the school is monitored is good and bringing about improvements. Governance is generally satisfactory. The school is more expensive per student than most schools but, given the significant improvements under way, it gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The dynamic leadership of the headteacher is inspiring far-reaching improvements.
- Teaching is good in the Sixth Form, so students learn well.
- Teaching overall is satisfactory but in too many lessons teachers fail to manage and challenge students sufficiently, particularly in Year 9 where teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Over the last five years, students' standards in national assessments have fallen behind the rising national average at the end of both Years 9 and 11. However, standards have recently started to improve.
- Attendance is poor and students are too often late.
- The school's curriculum is unsuitable for a number of students and is unsatisfactory. The school does not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship or to provide religious education in the Sixth Form and citizenship in Years 9 to 11. Not all aspects of the National Curriculum in design and technology are covered.
- There are shortages of properly qualified teachers in some subjects.
- The school cares effectively for its students, promoting trusting relationships.
- There are good links with other schools and colleges and the local community.
- Provision and achievement in art and design are very good. In physical education and religious education, they are good.

The school was previously inspected in 1997. It has successfully addressed most of the key issues identified in the report. New line management procedures are effective. Monitoring and setting targets to raise standards of teaching have improved. Teaching is better overall and assessment procedures have improved. Students' spiritual development is better. However, the school still does not meet requirements for collective worship and religious education in the Sixth Form. Attendance has declined. Students' standards in tests and examinations have not kept pace with national improvements and current standards are below average. Recent improvements have not fully reversed these declines; improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance compared with: | | all schools | | | similar schools |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2002 |
| Year 11 | GCSE/GNVQ examinations | D | D | E | D |

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

Students' achievement is satisfactory and current standards are below average. Standards in Year 9 are below average. On entering the school standards are well below expectations, so achievement is satisfactory. Current standards in Year 11 are below average. Students'

achievement in Years 10 and 11 is also satisfactory. The performance of boys is generally below that of girls in national tests. Students' achievement is very good in art and design and good in music and physical education. There are too few students from different ethnic groups to make precise judgements on standards but they achieve as well as their peers, as do students with special educational needs (SEN).

Students' personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory and there are good relationships throughout the school. A minority of students misbehave in lessons; many of these are in Year 9, where behaviour is unsatisfactory. Development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory. Attendance is poor because it is well below the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in the Sixth Form. For the school as a whole, six out of ten lessons seen were good or better. Teaching is best in Years 12 and 13 where three quarters of lessons were good or better. Too many lessons in Year 9 are unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in information and communications technology (ICT) in Year 9. Teachers' expectations of these younger students' behaviour are low and their management is sometimes ineffective. As a result, learning in some lessons in Year 9 is unsatisfactory. Older students participate well in their learning and are receptive to teachers' expectations.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory; it does too little to address students' needs. It does not meet national requirements to teach ICT, citizenship and all aspects of design and technology. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students. Guidance to help students improve and opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities are satisfactory. Assessment provides the school with valuable information which is used to set improvement targets for students. The involvement of students in running the school is satisfactory and improving. The school has good links with the local community and other schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is a very good leader and gives a powerful sense of purpose to the school. This has raised staff and student morale and developed a climate for improvement. Management of the school is satisfactory and line management has improved. Methods of self-evaluation are satisfactory and the school has used its knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses to set clear and sensible priorities for improvement. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body were unable to arrest the decline of the school in previous years. They have not ensured that the school meets its statutory requirements. However, governors currently understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and support the school well, seeking to challenge its priorities.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally satisfied with the school. Most report that their children like school. A minority are concerned about behaviour and, while behaviour is satisfactory overall, it is unsatisfactory in Year 9. Some parents feel that the school does not take sufficient notice of their views or take account of their suggestions. The inspection finds no evidence to support this. Most students like the school and think it is a good school, saying that teaching is good. Although most students showed concerns about behaviour and bullying in their questionnaires, when interviewed they say that bullying is not common and the school deals with it well. Behaviour concerns are justified only in Year 9. Minorities of students are unhappy over homework and find assessment unhelpful. The inspection does not support these concerns.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve attendance and punctuality.
- Improve teaching by ensuring that students are challenged in their work and behaviour.
- Introduce a curriculum which more accurately reflects students' needs and aspirations.
- Ensure that subjects have sufficient well-qualified staff to deliver the curriculum.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the school provides acts of collective worship and provides religious education in the Sixth Form.
- Meet National Curriculum requirements for citizenship and design and technology.

CASTLE MANOR COMMUNITY SCHOOL, SUMMARY OF THE SIXTH FORM REPORT

The Sixth Form has 87 students, which is smaller than average. Most follow AS and A Level courses. There are strong curriculum links with a nearby school and subjects are taught in a consortium.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the Sixth Form is good. Students' standards are broadly average and their achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning and the assessment of students' work are good. The curriculum is unsatisfactory because it does not provide the required course in religious education for all students or provide suitable courses for all students. Numbers in the Sixth Form have fallen over recent years but the school is working well to reverse this trend. The management of the Sixth Form is good and governance is satisfactory. The Sixth Form gives satisfactory value for money. Improvement since the time of the last inspection is satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are good.
- The current curriculum is not suitable for a number of students.
- Students are still not provided with religious education, despite the recommendations of the previous report.
- Students' work is thoroughly assessed so that they have clear targets for improvement.
- Leadership and management of the Sixth Form are good. There is a clear vision for its future.
- Students' attitudes, attendance and behaviour are good.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the Sixth Form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the Sixth Form were inspected.

| Curriculum area | Evaluation |
|--|--|
| English, languages and communication | English. Satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good and students receive high quality support throughout their courses. Their achievement is satisfactory. Leadership and management are good. |
| Mathematics | Mathematics. Good. With good teaching and a suitable curriculum, standards are improving. Students' achievement is good. The area is well led and managed. |
| Science | Biology. Good. Current standards are average. Teaching and achievement are good and assessment data used well to bring about improvements. |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel | Travel and tourism. Satisfactory. Students' achievement is satisfactory and their standards are broadly average. Teaching is satisfactory but the subject suffers from a lack of leadership. |
| Physical Education | Physical education. Good. Teaching is very good and students' achieve well. Standards are broadly average and students benefit from good quality support. Leadership is satisfactory. |
| Information and communication technology | Information and communication technology. Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students' standards are improving. Leadership and management are satisfactory. |

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The use of assessment to promote students' learning is good; form tutors make good use of the data to ensure that all students are suitably aware of their strengths and areas for improvement and to set appropriate targets. Most students feel they are given a good degree of responsibility and treated as young adults.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. New leadership of the school has reinvigorated this area and the schools' response to declining numbers has been rigorous. The Sixth Form has a sense of purpose and aspirations for its future are high. The management of the links with the partner school is good and ensures a broader curriculum.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have a positive view of the Sixth Form. They say they enjoy Sixth Form life and get on well together. They applaud the quality of teaching. However, a minority reported bullying and harassment. Many feel that advice given on what to study and opportunities after leaving school was not adequate. A large minority also feel that the school does not seek their views sufficiently. In fact, there is no bullying and advice given is satisfactory. The school regularly asks for and acts on students' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are below average in Years 9 to 11 but are improving.
- Students' achievements are satisfactory during their time at school.
- Standards in art and design in Years 10 and 11 are well above average and students achieve very well.

Commentary

1. The area of the school is one of marked social and educational disadvantages. As a result, students start life at the school in Year 9 with academic standards which are well below expectations. Social skills are also underdeveloped; in consequence significant numbers of these students are difficult to teach and slow to settle to life in an upper school. Despite these handicaps, students generally achieve satisfactorily in Year 9; following what are generally carefully-planned courses the majority of students make worthwhile gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 30.3 (30.0) | 33.4 (33.3) |
| Mathematics | 34.4 (33.7) | 35.4 (34.7) |
| Science | 32.3 (31.3) | 33.6 (33.3) |

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

2. The school's results in tests at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated a little from year to year but, overall, the trend in results was below the rising national trend. There were variations between standards in the three main subjects. In 2003, compared with national averages, mathematics results were broadly similar, science results were below average and those in English were well below average. However, when compared with these students' prior attainment in tests at the end of Year 6, mathematics results were above average, those in science were average and English results were below average. These figures indicate generally satisfactory achievement for this group of students over Years 7 to 9. Girls' results were slightly better than those of boys.

3. Year 9 students' current standards are largely below what is expected nationally and well below expectations in ICT. Their standards are average in art and design and religious education. These standards generally represent a distinct improvement on Year 9 standards as exemplified by national tests and indicate that the changes wrought in the school since last September are beginning to have positive outcomes. In terms of statutory targets for students at the end of Year 9 in 2003, while results were broadly similar to those in 2002, the school comfortably exceeded its targets in English, mathematics and science.

4. The gains students make in Year 9 provide a sound foundation for their continuing studies. With generally better behaviour and attitudes, students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. It is good in music and very good in art and design.

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

| | School results | National results |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades | 34 (34) | 52 (50) |
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades | 82 (86) | 91 (91) |
| Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades | 94 (99) | 96 (96) |
| Average point score per student (best eight subjects) | 28.1 (34.7) | 30.5 (34.7) |

There were 153 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. GCSE results lag behind the improving national trend for the five years up to and including 2003. Results in 2003 were well below average in comparison with all schools nationally and below average when compared with these students' Year 9 results. The school was particularly successful in the proportion of students who gained more than five or more than one grade at A* to G at GCSE, where the results were average in comparison to their previous standards. Most subjects' GCSE results in 2003 were well below average. However there were some exceptions. Art and design results were well above average, and in physical education the results were average. Standards were below average in design and technology, geography, French and religious education. Some of these variations can be explained by variations in the quality of teaching; for example the art and design department has very good teaching in Years 10 and 11. The percentage of students who gained five GCSE A*-C grades and their average points scores fell well short of the school's 2003 target, but the percentage of those who gained one or more grade A*-G exceeded the target. This indicates considerable weaknesses in the schools' former assessment procedures. There are no significant differences between boys and girls.

6. Year 11 students' current standards are generally below expectations, but this is better than the GCSE standards in the previous year. Again this illustrates the strong impact that the new leadership has had. Standards are much better than expected in art and design and are in line with what is expected in mathematics, music, physical education and religious education.

7. The achievement of students with SEN and disabilities is satisfactory. Work is well adapted to match students' needs. This is most effective where there is joint planning between teachers and teaching assistants. All students with SEN leave school with recognised qualifications. There are too few students from different ethnic groups to make precise judgements on standards but their achievement is satisfactory.

Sixth Form

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

| | School results | National results |
|--|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades | 83.7 (63.6) | 91.5 (90.3) |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 8.2 (8.3) | 36.1 (35.5) |
| Average point score per student | 139.3 (166.8) | 253.1 (254.5) |

There were 30 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. Students' standards in the Sixth Form are currently broadly average. The relatively low numbers of students who sit each examination mean that national comparisons can be unreliable. In 2003 examinations, the average points score of students was well below the national average. There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' results.

9. Given that students enter the Sixth Form with standards which are generally below what is expected, their examination results and standards seen during the inspection represent satisfactory achievement. The good teaching seen in the Sixth Form is leading to improvements in students' achievement. In the six subjects inspected, standards seen were in line with expectations in mathematics, biology, physical education and in leisure/travel and tourism. In English and ICT they were below what was expected. Students' achievement was good in mathematics, science and physical education and satisfactory in the other subjects inspected.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes, values and personal development are satisfactory. Behaviour is also satisfactory. Attendance is poor. Overall, provision to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Most students are positive about their experiences in school.
- Relationships between students are good.
- Attendance is poor and punctuality is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

10. Most students think well of the school and value most of the teaching and support that is provided. They consider they are well prepared for their future careers. A learning culture is growing and more students are becoming keen to do well. Whilst many students behave well, some are justifiably unhappy with the poorer behaviour of a significant number of others, mainly in Year 9, because it disrupts their learning. Some teachers do not effectively apply the school's discipline policy. The number of exclusions is high and justified by the nature of the offences. Students get on well together and so bullying is not an issue. A significant number of students are less than positive about school and find it difficult to adjust to the school's now higher expectations.

11. Students with learning difficulties generally behave well and with support from the team of teaching assistants improve their personal development, self-esteem and confidence. However, some students who lack motivation find it easy to misbehave.

12. New strategies have recently been introduced to improve standards of behaviour and reduce exclusions and they are showing signs of success.

Ethnic background of students

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British |
| White – any other White background |
| Mixed – White and Asian |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian |
| Black or Black British – African |
| Chinese |

Exclusions in the last school year

| No of students on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 463 | 86 | 8 |
| 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |

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

13. Approximately one in every five students is absent for an average of more than one day per week and attendance overall is well below the average for similar schools. Many students arrive late for school and some lessons.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 9.8 | School data | 1.9 |
| National data | 7.2 | National data | 1.1 |

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

14. The system for monitoring attendance is inefficient. Contact with parents on the first day of absence is not effective and alienates some parents. High or improved attendance is recognised but attempted improvement in attendance and punctuality is not supported by enterprising and

motivational promotion. The school does not work closely enough with the welfare services. The situation is compounded because registers are not always correctly completed.

15. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Religious education and assembly themes contribute well but form periods do so inconsistently. Art, music and physical education provide a good spiritual dimension but other subjects do not include spiritual appreciation in lesson planning. Students develop an adequate degree of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The school effectively promotes awareness of right and wrong, although some students have difficulty putting understanding into practice. Many students have a low level of self-esteem and confidence. They respond well to receiving recognition for academic and personal achievement but they do not yet have enough opportunities to take responsibility, although more are emerging. The school council provides a good experience in citizenship and students' fund-raising for charities demonstrates their concern for the plight of others. Students appreciate their own cultural traditions and, to some extent, the faiths of other peoples but are less aware of the implications of a multi-cultural society.

Sixth Form

16. Students' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are good. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. Students enjoy their experiences in the Sixth Form and are conscientious. Students' independent study skills are satisfactory overall. Students co-operate well with their tutors and are willing to take responsibility for their own community. They value the good teaching and support provided. Behaviour and relationships between students are good. Participation in enrichment activities is good although the range of experiences available is limited. Attendance at lessons is good and much better than that in Years 9 to 11. Many students do not arrive on time for registration periods.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education that the school provides is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 12 and 13. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school provides good care for students and there are good links with the local community and with other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning.

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory and assessment is good. Teaching is unsatisfactory in Year 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Students respond well to the quality of lessons and their learning is also satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Too much teaching in Year 9 is unsatisfactory: some teachers lack the appropriate strategies to enforce order and students' learning suffers; expectations can be too low and students are not sufficiently challenged.
- There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching does too little to promote independent learning.
- The school gathers assessment information well and uses it increasingly to promote achievement.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 107 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 0 (0%) | 19 (18%) | 45 (42%) | 35 (33%) | 7 (6 %) | 1 (1%) | 0 (0%) |

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. While in many subjects teaching is satisfactory or better, there are still too many unsatisfactory lessons. These are largely concentrated in Year 9. The underlying reasons for this are complex. The number of students coming into Year 9 in 2003 was much reduced from previous years because of the difficulties that the school was experiencing at the time of selection and its poor reputation in the town. Students with high educational aspirations tended to select other schools. Consequently, the ability and motivation of this particular group of students on entry to the school was below that of previous years and well below national expectations. Many students arrived at the school uninterested in their education. In particular, there is a minority group of disaffected, lower attaining students who are mainly boys. Behaviour and attitudes amongst Year 9 teaching groups are unsatisfactory, and are distinctly worse than elsewhere in the school.

18. Lessons in Year 9 are disturbed by the disruptive behaviour and consistently unco-operative attitudes of this minority. The school has not adapted its teaching sufficiently to meet the learning needs of this Year 9 group. The few unsatisfactory lessons seen are spread across a variety of subjects and teachers, so that very few subject areas report unsatisfactory teaching, overall. Many teachers whose lessons were good or better in Years 10 to 13 experienced difficulty with these unmotivated and difficult students.

19. There is a contrast between teaching and achievement amongst Year 9 students. It is the actions of a minority that sometimes prevents effective lessons. However, the achievement of the whole year group overall is satisfactory. The standards on entry to the school are well below average; currently standards in Year 9 are below average, indicating good achievement. Following the National Curriculum, students' rate of progress in Year 9 enables them to start GCSE courses with standards which are below rather than well below average.

20. The great majority of lessons are satisfactory or better. Where teaching is good or better, lessons are thoroughly planned, with careful attention given to ensuring that all students have the correct degree of challenge. Students are encouraged and engaged and relationships in the classroom are constructive. Students are effectively managed by teachers. Behaviour and attitudes are much better amongst older students and this encourages a better pace to lessons. However, students lack independence in their learning, they are not confident when asked to undertake extended work or research, and teaching does not do enough to promote their independence. Teachers' expectations are higher for students taking GCSE and other examination courses and students respond well, working with an emphasis on meeting the requirements of the examinations.

21. Teaching and learning for students with SEN are satisfactory. Programmes of work are carefully planned. Individual education plans (IEPs) are used well to help students to reach their targets. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress of students with a statement of educational need and this enables them to enjoy a full curriculum with other members of their class.

22. The school has put considerable energy into developing systems of assessment. Students take nationally recognised tests on entry to the school and at other times. The results of these tests are used to set targets for students to aim at as they progress towards their Year 11 examinations. These goals are generally short-term in nature and are regularly reviewed, in consultation with form tutors. This means they are of great practical value to students. Form tutors receive comprehensive assessment information on individual students in preparation for their consultation meetings. This data is also used to track students' progress, to predict grades in examinations and to trigger intervention if required. In this way, assessment is effectively used to promote higher standards.

Sixth Form

23. Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form are good. The teaching promotes the good achievement seen from Sixth Form students. Students have positive attitudes, so lessons tend to have good pace. Teachers consistently encourage students and foster constructive relationships. The attention given to the requirements of examinations is good and ensures that planning of lessons has a strong focus on learning objectives. Homework is more effectively utilised to promote students' learning than it is in the main school. This also has a positive effect in developing students' independent learning skills.

24. The use of assessment to promote Sixth Form students' learning is good. The school collects and analyses data to predict expected grades in A and AS Level examinations. Departments use this data to ensure that all students are making good progress and are aware of their strengths and areas for improvement. The use of assessment data to set realistically challenging short- and long-term targets for students is a significant factor in ensuring good achievement in their time in the Sixth Form.

The curriculum

The school's curriculum is unsatisfactory as there is incomplete coverage of the National Curriculum. Not all staff are qualified in the areas they teach and there are posts which have yet to be filled in some subjects. Resources are unsatisfactory, particularly in the library.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Statutory requirements for ICT and design and technology are not met and there is no provision for the teaching of citizenship throughout the school.
- Careers education is good; guidance for option choices in Year 9 is good.
- The range of courses in Years 10 and 11 is limited.
- Staffing and resources are unsatisfactory.
- There is no teaching of religious education in the Sixth Form
- The Sixth Form curriculum is enhanced by joint provision with a nearby school.

Commentary

25. Overall, the curriculum in Year 9 is unsatisfactory. While it is generally broad and balanced, citizenship does not meet statutory requirements. Certain aspects of the design and technology course are not taught, such as electronics, textiles and plastics, and this is also unsatisfactory. There is now sufficient time for music and physical education in Year 11 and religious education is now taught and meets statutory requirements. These improvements have taken place since the previous inspection. The curriculum in the school offers equality of opportunity to all students. Students may study one of two languages, French or German, and drama is taught to all students in Year 9.

26. In Years 10 and 11, a good range of courses are offered. However, although courses generally lead to accreditation at GCSE they do not cater for the aptitude and abilities of most students in terms of vocational education. This narrowness results in an unsatisfactory curriculum. The curriculum for ICT does not meet statutory requirements because there are too few opportunities for students to develop their skills across a range of subjects. The school is aware of this and is planning alternative curriculum arrangements relevant to their students for next year.

27. Because provision for students with SEN is effective they have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) liaises well with teachers and there is a close working relationship with the local authority agencies. This means that students who have a statement of need receive appropriate support. There is a flexible learning programme for students for whom a full range of GCSE subjects is inappropriate. The school has yet to make formal identification of those students who are gifted and talented.

28. The arrangements for careers education are good. They begin in Year 9 when students are guided in making option choices for courses at GCSE and planning career pathways. The quality of guidance is good and students report that they are pleased with the support offered by the school at this time. Work experience is available to all students in Year 10 for a period of two weeks and this helps them to make informed choices and experience the world of work. Links with outside agencies and businesses are good and the school maintains links with West Suffolk College. There is satisfactory support from Connexions advisers who offer advice to students.

29. There is a satisfactory range of enrichment activities in sport, music and drama but participation rates from students are often low. The school has participated in a trip to Spain to promote the language but other visits are few. Support for study outside the school day is good. Teachers give of their time to provide additional support sessions in a range of subjects, often targeting students who need additional help for forthcoming GCSE examinations. Personal and social education is satisfactory. It is taught by form tutors. However, although support is available in terms of materials to be taught, not all teachers are confident in some aspects of the course. There are policies for drugs, alcohol awareness and sex education.

30. The match between staff qualifications and subjects taught is good in most subjects. However, overall it is unsatisfactory. There is a shortage of a teacher in mathematics and non-specialist teaching in sociology. The school suffers from long-term teacher absence and this has had a detrimental effect on standards in English and modern foreign languages. No technical support is available in art and design and design and technology.

31. There is sufficient accommodation throughout the school but much of it is in need of refurbishment. Some classrooms are in poor decorative order. The school has already embarked on a programme of alteration and refurbishment to ensure better quality accommodation for teachers and students. The art and design and ICT accommodation is now very good but access for disabled students is poor.

32. Resources are unsatisfactory throughout the school, with the exception of ICT where the ratio of computers to students is above the national average. There are insufficient books in the library and those in place are of mixed quality. Insufficient use is made of the library to promote learning.

Sixth Form

33. The curriculum in the Sixth Form is unsatisfactory as there is no provision for religious education. A wide range of subject choices is available to students at both AS and A Level and this choice is enhanced by the joint provision with a local school. There is good co-operation between the two schools in the planning of the curriculum and this ensures that courses have viable numbers. The timetables at the two schools do not coincide and at both schools this often results in students arriving late.

34. The Sixth Form has a policy of open access. There are vocational courses in leisure and tourism and travel and tourism, but more such courses are needed. There are few opportunities for work related learning and the school is planning to extend these opportunities. Links exist with West Suffolk College where the school is planning to develop appropriate work related opportunities for students. The general studies programme, particularly in Year 12, offers opportunities for developing a range of skills such as ICT, but not enough time is allocated to personal and social education. Enrichment for students is satisfactory. Students often organise their own activities, such as booking the local sports centre for activities and organising netball teams.

35. In English, a high number of students study both language and literature. Theatre studies and drama are available at AS and A Level. In mathematics the school has created a module for the less able students and this has met with some success. The product design examination in design and technology is popular and valuable. There are good links with local colleges and

universities and, although there is support for students in preparing them for the next stage of their education, students report that careers guidance has been unsatisfactory. They state that they were surprised and unprepared for the amount of extra work required from them when transferring to the Sixth Form.

Care, guidance and support

Students are well cared for. The advice, guidance and support they receive are satisfactory. The school encourages students to become involved in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good.
- Transfer and induction arrangements are good.
- Students' views are valued and acted upon.
- Advice and guidance in the Sixth Form are good.
- Information for Year 11 students about what to expect in the Sixth Form is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

36. Relationships between almost all teachers and students are constructive and trusting. Teachers know their charges well and students refer to them for help with confidence. The procedures for child protection and children in care are very well managed and arrangements for health and safety are good. The school does its best to meet the personal and individual needs of the students. The transfer and induction arrangements for new students enable them to integrate quickly into their new school.

37. Students receive satisfactory advice and guidance about their work and how to improve in most subjects. The recent trials of tutorial review days in Years 9 and 11 were a success and are to be extended to other year groups in order to improve the process of targeting for improvement. The extra tuition that is available outside the school day enables students to catch up. Academic mentoring provides effective support to selected underachieving students but does not involve all students who would benefit.

38. The information and guidance regarding subject choices made in Year 9 are good. Advice from careers teachers and advisers helps students to make informed choices about the next stage of their education and careers. This is further enhanced by a careers day and vocational experiences for some students at a nearby college.

39. Because teachers and teaching assistants know individual students well, trusting relationships help to build up students' self-confidence. Students play an important part in their own development by contributing towards their targets. By having close relationships with the feeder schools there is a smooth transition for students moving to the high school stage.

40. The school goes to considerable lengths to obtain students' views and encourages them to take responsibility for their own community. Through the school council students are currently being asked to suggest improvements to the anti-bullying policy.

Sixth Form

41. Tutors make good use of assessment data to ensure that all students are suitably aware of their strengths and areas for improvement and to set appropriate targets. Tutors are readily accessible for academic and personal support. Support and guidance from the head of the Sixth Form is very good and students report that they are appreciative of her efforts on their behalf.

42. Students are pleased with the way they are treated and their views are regularly sought and acted upon. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their own community and social life and to take advantage of enrichment opportunities.

43. Students are well informed about what courses are available in the Sixth Form but many justifiably feel that they were inadequately informed about the implications of their studies and what life would be like in the Sixth Form. Information about and preparation for higher education are good. However, students considering other pathways do not receive enough information about other opportunities after school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Links with other schools and the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Parents express general satisfaction with the school.
- The parents' and teachers' association supports the school well.
- The school works closely with other schools and colleges.
- Community involvement provides valuable benefits for the school and students.

Commentary

44. Parents are satisfied with the quality of education and care provided. Most confirm that their children like school. The school takes account of parents' views, although a minority of parents is unsure about this. Parents' concerns about behaviour are partially justified because there is unsatisfactory behaviour in Year 9.

45. Information for parents complies with requirements and is generally satisfactory. Annual school reports, student handbooks and newsletters keep parents up to date with students' progress and school matters. Parents are not involved in the curriculum or in practical ways during the school day but parents of students who have special education needs are involved in the review process. Parental attendance at consultation meetings has not been high. The school wishes to involve parents more in their children's learning and attracted a very good response when piloting the new tutorial review day. It has been less successful so far in engaging the support of a substantial number of parents with regard to improving attendance and punctuality. The parents' and teachers' association contributes well through fund raising activities.

46. Although parents and carers are invited to the annual reviews of students with a statement of need, very few attend. Those who do are invited to contribute to the education programme and targets for individual education plans.

47. Arrangements with middle schools provide well for the transfer and educational continuity of students. Links with colleges are good for vocationally related courses and preparation for further education. Links with institutions for higher education and teacher training are good.

48. Community use and involvement is good overall. Local groups use the premises for education and leisure activities. A playgroup and a college share the premises with the school. Links with employers are good. Out of school visits and fieldwork supplement studies and there are some limited opportunities for experiences abroad. Students are involved in the community through competitive sport, musical activities, charitable support and work experiences.

Sixth Form

49. Parents' views on the Sixth Form are positive. The school has satisfactory arrangements with its partner upper school for shared Post 16 educational provision and this provides a greater choice of courses. In the main, Sixth Form students are positive about what school offers them. Most students feel they are given a good level of responsibility and treated as young adults.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management overall is **good**. With the new headteacher, sweeping reforms leading to rapid improvements are underway.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good.
- Leaders provide good role models for other staff and students.
- Strategic planning is good.
- The school makes a good contribution to initial teacher training.

40. This is a school in transition, following a lengthy period of crisis management and low staff morale. For a number of years the school has experienced major difficulties in recruiting and retaining permanent staff and this, along with problems in leadership and management, has impeded developments in the quality of education provided. During her six months in post the new headteacher has very successfully identified and implemented strategies for improvement and there are now clear signs that staff and students are working with a new sense of purpose and direction. This is a major area of improvement since the last inspection. For example, key strategies for improving standards of students' behaviour and dress were quickly implemented and this has had a noticeable effect on the improved climate for learning in the school.

41. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. She quickly identified priorities for improvement and has very successfully shared her vision for the school with staff, governors and parents, who, as a result, feel very positive about planned changes. The leadership of the curriculum by the headteacher is good. She has identified key areas of weakness and has put in place strategies to improve the provision, particularly in design and technology, citizenship and the range of the curriculum for age 14 - 19. The school's recent bid to become a specialist college is of good quality, and, if successful, should strengthen the curriculum provision in design and technology, ICT and other subjects.

42. The quality of leadership of other key staff is satisfactory. Most teachers in charge of subjects provide good role models for other staff and students. In music, physical education, religious education and science, leadership is good and is helping to improve provision. Good leadership by the SENCO has helped to provide effective classroom support for those students requiring it. In art and design, the high quality of leadership over a sustained period has contributed to high expectations and high levels of achievement by students. The quality of leadership by other members of the senior management team is satisfactory overall.

43. Management is satisfactory. In art and design the quality of management is very good. This is because departmental planning and review procedures, together with very good use of assessment data to plan the curriculum and help students to improve, contribute to high achievement of students. Strategic planning is good. The recently introduced senior management structure is having the desired effect of providing all staff with a clearer responsibility for implementing and reinforcing whole school policies for such aspects as teaching and learning, discipline and assessment. The school improvement plan is a clearly written and relevant document, based on the active involvement of staff, governors and parents. It focuses clearly on five key areas of improvement, including the climate for learning, teaching and learning, the quality of the curriculum, and improvements in Sixth Form provision.

44. The SENCO, who also has other duties as an assistant headteacher, has a clear vision of support for learning: the team of teaching assistants are managed well and share good practice. The link governor has a good understanding of SEN and liaises well with the department.

45. The quality of monitoring and the use of data for self-evaluation by the headteacher and senior management team are satisfactory. Satisfactory systems for monitoring teaching and learning are now in place in many departments. This is an improvement on the last inspection. The performance management process is now in place, although its impact on staff development and

the improvement is difficult to evaluate in the relatively short time it has been operating. Staff professional development has been well supported in many departments, although this has not hitherto been linked to clearly identified needs. The induction process for new staff is effective and there are good links with higher education for teacher training.

46. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has worked closely with the headteacher on the important work of raising the profile of the school in the community. However, governors were unable to arrest the decline in school results and in staff and student morale in the period before the current headteacher's appointment. Governors have some understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but have not ensured that statutory requirements for the curriculum are met, some of which were key issues in the previous inspection report. Governors effectively question the data and results they are given and are very supportive of the headteacher and senior management team and the improvements that are being made.

47. Financial management is satisfactory. A finance officer manages the school's finances effectively. Organisation is efficient; the headteacher and governors receive regular reports enabling them to deal with financial affairs based upon the school's development plan. All recommendations from the last audit report have been implemented. Falling rolls and high staffing costs occurring through long term staff illnesses have resulted in a deficit budget for the current year but the school has taken steps to rectify this in the next financial year.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

| Income and expenditure (£) | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Total income | 1,820,388.00 |
| Total expenditure | 2,113,762.00 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 4,270.00 |

| Balances (£) | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Balance from previous year | 114,748.00 |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 26,256.00 |

Sixth Form

48. Leadership and management of the Sixth Form are good. The head of Sixth Form provides good leadership so that she and other Sixth Form tutors share a clear sense of shared purpose. This enables teaching and learning to proceed well because policies such as assessment, advice and guidance are consistently applied and help students to achieve well. Leadership and management are good in mathematics, science and physical education. They are satisfactory in English and ICT but unsatisfactory in travel/leisure and tourism.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English and modern foreign languages were inspected in full.

English

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Despite previous low standards there is clear evidence of improvement across the school.
- Effective contingency plans and strong leadership by the headteacher have ensured continuity during a period of teacher change.
- Frequent changes of staff have affected students' achievement.
- The absence of the subject leader has resulted in inconsistent standards in teaching and learning.

Commentary

49. Standards in English are currently below average in all years. Although attainment in national tests in Year 9 has been well below average there was an improvement in 2003. Previously there was no clear trend of improvement. Standards now seen in Year 9 are better but are still below average. Results in GCSE English examinations have been well below average, but in GCSE English literature they are much closer to the national average. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are better, but are still below average.

50. Attainment of students on entry to the school has been well below average, particularly in the current Year 9. Based on low prior attainment, achievement is satisfactory in every year. No noticeable difference in achievement between boys and girls was seen. However, the achievement of some lower attaining students in Year 9 is unsatisfactory. Negative attitudes to learning and poor behaviour by a minority result in work being unfinished. Although very few students achieve the highest grades at GCSE there is evidence from work seen that high attaining students are achieving at least satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. As a result of good support, students with SEN in Years 10 and 11 achieve well.

51. Teaching and learning are satisfactory both in Year 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is effective, lessons are well planned and structured with appropriately varied groupings and activities. Teachers use questions skilfully to ensure that all students participate and respond. Students are provided with useful writing guidance and prompt sheets to help them structure their writing. Detailed, encouraging marking gives students clear indications of how to improve and they are also reminded of their individual targets. In Years 10 and 11, effective team teaching was observed and students responded thoughtfully and imaginatively when given time to reflect on poetry they had read. Where teaching and learning are less effective it is because some teachers move on too quickly without reinforcing what has been learnt. There are not enough opportunities for extended writing. Teachers do not always plan to meet differing needs, so that in Year 9 high attaining students are not always extended. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of students' independence, for example in using dictionaries to check spelling and vocabulary.

52. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. Although the curriculum leader has been absent for some time she had started to implement an appropriate action plan to check students' work, observe classroom teaching and develop new schemes of work for Year 9. The headteacher closely

monitors the work of the English department and has implemented effective contingency plans since the absence of a curriculum leader. These include the redeployment of teachers to cover need, and the employment of a visiting expert teacher who has supported less experienced staff and drawn up an improvement plan that is being implemented. However, there are inadequate resources in some areas. The lack of a permanent subject leader and frequent changes of teachers have resulted in some inconsistencies and variations in expectations and standards.

53. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Although standards had declined there is evidence of clear improvement in the last year.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. Standards of language and literacy are below average in Years 9 to 11. There is a school literacy policy and there has been staff training on supporting the development of students' literacy. However, there is currently no senior manager overseeing language and literacy development across the school with the vigour that is needed to raise standards. There is some good practice, mainly the display of key words and 'word walls' in different subjects, but opportunities to develop reading and writing skills are not consistently planned.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The head of department has a clear vision and staff are enthusiastic and committed.
- Students often participate well in lessons and are prepared to use the target language.
- The curriculum in Year 9 is unsatisfactory, because it results in lower overall standards.
- There is too little use of ICT.
- Departmental documentation needs to be completed, and in some cases revised.
- Too little effective homework is set.

Commentary:

55. Current standards in Year 9 are in line with expectations in French, but below expectations in German because students only start the subject at the beginning of the year. As some students study only German, this means that overall standards are below what is expected in Year 9. However, with well below standards on entry to the school, this represents satisfactory achievement.

56. GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average, reflecting the generally low standards of literacy in the school. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 remain below average, mainly because of the current staffing difficulty, which is affecting some Year 11 students. A small group of students studying Spanish in Year 11 are achieving well relative to their ability, but their standard of work is still below expectations. Speaking skills are satisfactory in all year groups in French, and there was some good writing in Year 11 French in the form of GCSE course work. French reading and listening skills are average.

57. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Imaginative use of materials and activities leads to good learning. However, in some cases good learning is compromised by poor behaviour and attitudes, particularly in Year 9 and in lessons affected by staff absence. Lessons are generally well planned, with good use of starter activities and summing up. Management of some challenging behaviour is in some cases very good, but less successful on other occasions. Some teachers plan and deliver lessons to challenge students with a wide range of abilities but this practice is inconsistent. Students' access to ICT facilities is unplanned and opportunities for its use are not indicated in schemes of work.

58. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department is a good role model, in spite of her relative inexperience. However, given the department's current difficulties, she needs support to implement her vision for the department, and to establish the position of modern foreign languages within the curriculum. The department lacks a handbook to establish clear expectations of behaviour and standards within the department. Schemes of work are out of date and do not reflect current practice. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. The numbers of students who choose to continue to take a modern foreign language at GCSE Level and in the Sixth Form are low, largely due to the random way in which students are organised into languages in Year 9.

59. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Staffing changes have affected continuity and the standard of teaching has declined.

MATHEMATICS

The only subject in this area, mathematics, is reported in full.

Mathematics

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Most teachers demonstrate good subject expertise.
- Use of assessment and recording systems is well developed.
- Teaching styles do not do enough to encourage open dialogue.
- Departmental documentation is in need of revision.

Commentary

60. Standards of students on entry to the school in Year 9 are well below expectations. Results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003 were average and those in GCSE examinations were well below average. However, previous results in GCSE were improving and moving close to national norms.

61. Standards seen during the inspection in Year 9 were below nationally expected levels. However, given students' starting points on entry to the school, their achievement is good overall. Algebra, together with most work requiring a degree of interpretation, is weaker than other aspects of mathematics. Students' understanding of number work and most features of probability are better. Those with special education needs make satisfactory progress; the work is matched to their ability and classroom support is good.

62. Standards in Year 10 and 11 are average with higher attaining students achieving well. Students were able to accurately identify and explain different methods of solving quadratic equations and effectively recall previously taught topics. Students of middle attainment display successful work in books, but retention of knowledge for tests is problematic and results in outcomes below those indicated by regular class work. Achievement overall is satisfactory.

63. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Well taught lessons show good planning, sound subject knowledge, effective rapport and appropriate challenge. As a result, students are engaged positively. Questioning is a constructive feature of teaching. However, questions which invite open discussion are seldom attempted and this reduces the contribution students make to mathematical debate. A significant minority of classes are taught by more than one teacher, which affects continuity and results in negative responses from some students. Students are well aware of their

current and predicted performance and at the conclusion of lessons they are expected to reflect upon and grade their understanding of the work. Following the guidelines of the National Numeracy Strategy, all lessons begin with a brief activity which sets a positive tone for learning. ICT is seen in some of the students' work but it needs to be used more widely and more often.

64. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers work well together and share a commitment to improve standards. Staffing shortages have made it difficult to plan for the future. Schemes of work and other departmental documentation are in urgent need of revision. However, whole school assessment procedures have now been thoroughly developed and are used effectively to set realistic targets to raise standards; this represents an improvement since the last inspection. The overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. Standards in the use of mathematics are broadly average, better in Years 10 and 11 than in Year 9. In science, the use of mathematics is insufficiently developed particularly in the area of graphs. However, in physical education graphical work is effectively used to display data on monitoring pulse rates and target zones to determine physiology. Data on population and weather is used well in geography coursework. Product design usefully employs imperial measurements, and weighing and measuring is prominent in food technology. Students learning German can count up to 100 and say when lessons begin and end. The use of mathematics within subject areas is in general incidental rather than planned.

SCIENCE

The only subject in this area, science, is reported in full.

Science

Provision for science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Results in the statutory tests of Year 9 students have improved significantly over the last four years.
- The quality of marking and assessment is helping students to improve.
- The use of learning resources is unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons.
- Although standards are improving they are not yet high enough.

Commentary

66. Results have improved over the last four years, with a higher proportion of students attaining at the higher level. However, in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, standards were below average. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, results were well below average in comparison with schools nationally. Boys' attainment was below that of girls and there were no significant differences in terms of ethnicity. The proportion of A* to C passes have improved slightly over the last 4 years, but they do not yet reflect students' full potential.

67. Current standards in Year 9 are below the national average but achievement is satisfactory. Higher attaining students have a sound grasp of the uses of satellite technology, but many students with average attainment struggle to explain how to calculate the cost of running electrical appliances. By Year 11, standards are below the national average but achievement is satisfactory. Higher attaining students can explain the process of polymerisation but many lower attaining students have difficulty explaining bonding arrangement in simple molecules.

68. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons teachers' expectations are good, classroom management is good, and clear learning objectives are reviewed at the end of the lesson. As a result, students respond well, are enthusiastic learners and achieve well. When teaching is unsatisfactory it is because of weaknesses in classroom management, limited teaching skills and ineffective use of time and resources. In a minority of lessons in Year 9, the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a small number of students impede learning and achievement. Assessment arrangements are good and sound progress has been made since the last inspection in using data to set targets for students. However, many students are not yet clear about what they should do to improve their predicted grades. Homework is regularly set and teachers' marking invariably includes supportive comments.

69. Leadership of the subject is good and has enabled the department to maintain its provision during recent times of high staff turnover and to raise standards of teaching and learning. Overall, management is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the teachers in charge have put a number of strategies in place to address identified weaknesses, including improved assessment systems, the use of data to analyse the achievement of students, and an improved departmental action plan. However, there is insufficient focus on the inadequacies of a minority of lessons in order to improve the achievement of students in Year 9. The quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory because of the impractical and inconvenient shape of some classrooms.

70. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory with improvements in teaching and learning and standards starting to rise.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The only subject in this area, ICT, is reported in full.

Information and communication technology

Provision for ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are well below average in Years 9 and below average in Year 11.
- Unsatisfactory teaching at Year 9 is not doing enough to raise standards.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- More focused teaching is leading to improved standards in Year 11.
- Good resources offer wider opportunities to more students.
- Greater involvement of students in target setting and assessing is helping raise standards.

Commentary

71. Standards are well below expectations in Year 9. Very few students demonstrate high standards. For example, when Year 9 students combine text and graphics, they do not consider the visual effect on a reader or viewer. The results in the GNVQ examination in 2003 were well below average, but the standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are rising. Achievement is satisfactory in both Year 9 and Year 11.

72. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Year 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, where there is some good and very good teaching. In Year 9, teachers do not plan all lessons sufficiently or make widespread use of progressive worksheets. As a result they find it difficult to keep the attention of students. Management of student behaviour is sometimes weak and results in a number of students failing to make any progress in lessons. Even when teachers plan effectively with challenging and relevant tasks, misbehaviour from a small number of students prevents others from improving their knowledge and skills. In Years 10 and 11, teachers plan more effectively. Clear lesson objectives and good use of technology to demonstrate what students have to do ensure that they can complete their tasks. Where pace of lessons is brisk, students concentrate and extend not

only their knowledge but also their skills in using ICT. Teachers set tasks which match examination syllabus requirements, though often only at the pass level with little opportunities for students to work towards the higher grades. In good and very good lessons, sharp focus on tasks that students can achieve is beginning to raise standards. End of lesson evaluation is not always achieved through incisive and directed questions and homework is not set to consolidate learning effectively. Assessment procedures do not yet fully involve students in setting and assessing targets.

73. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. Only a minority of students follow the GNVQ course. There are only limited cross-curricular opportunities for other students to develop their skills and understanding.

74. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is evidence of recent improvements. The implementation of the National Strategy ensures students in Year 9 now have a wider range of ICT experiences. It is also recognised that further developments are necessary to ensure all students are able to develop their ICT skills and understanding more fully. The introduction of an on-line management system provides support to staff for creating resources and tracking student progress. Timetabling arrangements in Year 10 have serious implications for the co-ordination of delivery of ICT. Improvements in courses and resources have benefited students, but they are still not attaining the standards they should. There has been significant financial investment in resources. The number of computers is better than average and they are managed by an efficient technician.

75. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have fallen and the school has not done enough to ensure the delivery of ICT in other subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. Many students in Years 10 and 11 do not have an appropriate range of ICT experiences. In science and English students use ICT to develop their coursework. Art provides a range of activities using digital cameras but has limited access to computers. In other subjects the provision is unsatisfactory, and access to computer suites is difficult to organise.

HUMANITIES

All three subjects in this area, history, geography and religious education are reported in full.

Geography

Provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Achievement in Year 9 is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and learning techniques are not always effective in improving students' geographical skills, knowledge and understanding, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- A range of useful resources helps to support students' learning.

Commentary

77. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Students' limited geographical skills, knowledge and understanding, combined with below average language and literacy skills on entry, affect the standards they reach. Achievement in Year 9 is unsatisfactory for the majority of students, as teaching does not meet the learning needs of all students. GCSE results in 2003 and in previous

years have been below average. Higher attaining students demonstrate above average standards in the lessons and work observed. For students in Years 10 and 11, achievement is satisfactory. Students, particularly higher attainers, improve their geographical skills as they extend their learning.

78. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students' attitudes are also satisfactory but there are limited opportunities for independent learning and investigative work. Teachers make good use of a variety of resources in Years 10 and 11 to teach topics. However, there is little evidence of the use of ICT, websites and other learning techniques to help students to increase their knowledge and understanding. There is frequently over-reliance on teachers providing information and answers to questions rather than ensuring that students develop their own independent learning skills. There is limited development of the use of learning methods which are innovative and targeted at raising students' individual standards, especially in GCSE work.

79. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Systems of assessment and target setting are effective in identifying students' ability and levels of attainment. Students experience a good range of curriculum opportunities such as visits and field trips to enhance their learning. The subject makes a good contribution to students' cultural development through the environmental and tourism topics that are covered.

80. Since the previous inspection, GCSE standards have remained broadly similar and improvement has been satisfactory.

History

Provision for history is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 have declined since the last inspection.
- Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives.
- Students' negative attitudes mean that learning is unsatisfactory in Year 9.
- The history curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting.
- Recent examinations results were well below average.

Commentary

81. In Year 9, overall achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because too many students have negative attitudes to learning. On entry to the school, students' standards of attainment are well below average. In Year 9 they are at present below average in their knowledge, understanding and historical skills. Weak literacy skills hinder the work of many students. Standards by Year 11 are also below average but students' achievement is satisfactory. Students' knowledge, understanding and skills in using and evaluating sources are below average, as are most students' longer pieces of written work.

82. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in Year 9 but in Year 11 both teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are consistently well planned with clear objectives, though sometimes teachers' presentation does not inspire students. Teachers make good use of resources, particularly of Powerpoint presentations and video. They mark and assess students' work regularly. Comments on assessed work are positive and encouraging, but not specific enough to give students a clear understanding of how they can improve. Historical vocabulary is taught systematically but students need further strategies to help them develop their writing skills. There is not enough variation of tasks to match the different abilities of students. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, management of students is not effective enough to ensure good behaviour in lessons. In Year 9 learning is unsatisfactory. A substantial minority of students show negative attitudes and poor social skills. These are evident in poor behaviour in lessons, even when teaching is satisfactory, and in their careless completion and presentation of work.

83. Given staffing constraints, leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Responsibilities are clearly allocated. The head of geography, who is a history specialist, provides satisfactory leadership to departmental staff. Monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory, though the use of data for monitoring performance is not yet fully developed. The history curriculum is broad and balanced. Students respond well to the interesting GCSE coursework assignments on the assassination of President Kennedy and on Popular Culture in the 1960s; the achievement of more able students in these assignments is good. However, the department does not have sufficient access to ICT in lessons.

84. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Students' work is now marked and assessed more regularly. However, standards of work have declined from average to below average both in Year 9 and by Year 11. The overall quality of both teaching and learning has fallen.

Religious Education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The teacher's good subject expertise helps to raise standards.
- Students' good attitudes to the subject support their learning.
- Teaching and learning styles for lower attaining students and those with special educational needs are not yet effective in raising standards.

Commentary

85. Standards in Year 9 are average in relation to the broad requirements of the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus of religious education. Students enter the school with well below average standards but their achievement in Year 9 is good because of the quality of teaching and learning. Results in the 2003 GCSE short course examination at the end of Year 11 were below the national average. Currently, more able students are now reaching average standards. Students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. However, achievement overall for the less able and students with SEN is detrimentally affected by a lack of targeted provision for their needs.

86. Teaching and learning in Year 9 are good and in Years 10 and 11 they are very good. Lessons are clearly planned. The teacher's very good knowledge and expertise in the subject, combined with good classroom management, ensure that students learn well. Students have good attitudes to the subject and apply themselves well. This is a positive factor in the standards reached.

87. Leadership and management of the subject are both good. Assessment and marking procedures are good. There is a good emphasis on seeking to improve standards. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students through the topics covered. Provision of a range of targeted learning activities aimed specifically at the needs of less able and SEN students across the school is underdeveloped.

88. A significant indication of the way in which the subject has improved since the last inspection is reflected in the fact that a group of Year 10 students have opted to study for a full GCSE religious studies course.

TECHNOLOGY

There is only one subject taught in this area, design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The curriculum is unsatisfactory because it lacks breadth.
- Teachers plan lessons effectively but do not use a wide enough range of skills.
- Practical resources are well used to promote learning.
- Classroom support for students with SEN is inadequate in some lessons.

Commentary

89. Students enter the school in Year 9 with underdeveloped technological skills and standards that are well below what is expected. At the end of Year 9 students' work is below expectations in both subject areas. GCSE examination results have been below average except in 2002 when they were in line with the national average. The 2003 results were below average but were similar to the results achieved in other subjects in the school. Achievement is satisfactory in Year 9. Although the below average results continue through Years 10 and 11 this again indicates satisfactory achievement.

90. Teaching and learning are good overall, although there is some unsatisfactory learning in Year 9. About half of the teaching is good or better, with the better lessons in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned. Time is short for many activities, especially in food technology, but pace is good. Both design and practical work are taught and students respond well to both types of activity. However, more experience with metal, plastic and electronics is needed and greater use of ICT would help presentation and calculation. Teaching methods are generally effective although some Year 9 classes present challenging behaviour due to students' inability to listen to instructions and explanations. Where classroom assistants are present, learning for those with SEN and many other students is increased as a result of the extra help and guidance they receive.

91. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The two areas of learning for technology are food and resistant materials. These two areas are managed independently by two experienced teachers. The situation is satisfactory whilst the department is operating on the current reduced curriculum. Food technology work is comprehensively and regularly marked but more regular use of National Curriculum or other grades would assist the analysis of trends for different groups of students.

92. Provision within the two areas of learning is satisfactory but the breadth of the curriculum is insufficient. In particular there is no teaching of textiles or electronics and very little of graphics. The use of materials is mainly restricted to fibreboard, wood and food. There is insufficient use of metals, plastic, electronic components or control systems. The requirements of the National Curriculum are not met in terms of the range of materials, equipment and processes in use.

93. There is insufficient staffing time to provide a broad and balanced curriculum in technology. Technical support is not adequate. Accommodation is spacious but is in need of refurbishment and redesign for a wider range of subjects. Resources are unsatisfactory in the resistant materials area where there is a lack of computers and computer aided design or manufacturing equipment. Modern software is also needed in both food and resistant materials areas.

94. The effectiveness of the design and technology department has declined since the last inspection. This is due to the reduction in staffing and the range of experiences provided. Recent examination results are generally lower than those reported at the time of the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected in full. Drama was sampled and one lesson was observed.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Students achieve very well.
- Specialist teachers use teaching strategies which challenge and motivate all students, including those with SEN.
- Very good assessment of students ensures that both teachers and students know what steps must be taken for further progress to be made.
- The very good leadership of the department provides a role model and sets high standards.
- There is insufficient access to ICT for students.

Commentary

95. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show students' standards are broadly in line with national averages. This is confirmed by the inspection. This represents good achievement, as most students enter Year 9 with standards below expectations for students of their ages. Students make good progress and use drawing, painting and multi media skilfully to create African masks after studying pattern and tribal art.

96. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average and have continued an upward trend. Although boys performed less well than girls, nevertheless their grades were considerably higher than the national average for boys. Current standards in Year 11 are well above average. Many of the highest attaining students in Year 9 do not opt for art GCSE and the subject is open to students of all abilities; consequently their attainment on entry to Year 10 is average. Despite this, students in Years 10 and 11 develop an extensive knowledge of art history. They extend their drawing and painting skills in an increasing range of mediums as they produce work in the styles of artists of their choice, becoming confident in the use of printing and sculpture to express themselves artistically. Achievement is very good; boys achieve particularly well in relation to their prior attainment.

97. Teaching is good in Year 9. Students benefit from a well-structured course despite its short duration, which does not always allow sufficient time for some students to develop their confidence. Specialist teachers plan lessons well, taking account of the needs and abilities of the students, to enable all of them to achieve well. Teachers use language and develop literacy skills very well to help the students learn effectively. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Strategies, such as creating a more practically based art and design course in addition to a fine art course, have motivated boys in particular. Assessment is very good with well-chosen tasks linked closely to self-evaluation, on-going and formative assessment. Students know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. The very good use of inter-active whiteboards provides high quality visual resources and teaching aids, which engage students' attention. Although ICT is very well used in the department, its use by students is limited by difficulties of access to computer equipment. Social, moral and cultural education is very well developed in art, but spiritual education less so.

98. The leadership of the department is very good. Very good schemes of work, policies and assessment procedures, as well as the successful mentoring of the recently trained art teacher, have ensured that his vision of art is communicated very well. The present system of subject rotation with design and technology prevents continuity and inhibits greater progress. The gradual improvement of the art accommodation involving the creation of dedicated art studios and a gallery, establishes art as a high profile subject within the school. The management of art is very good.

Although the department would benefit from a technician, staffing and resources are good. Students are encouraged to use the art rooms out of school hours and teachers are there to help them, but there are as yet limited opportunities for them to work with visiting artists or to visit art galleries and museums. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Drama

99. One Year 9 drama lesson was sampled. Standards were below average. Students' movement was controlled, their response was enthusiastic, and they were being introduced to a sound foundation of drama and social skills. Teaching and learning were good. Teaching was lively, good-humoured but firm and students' achievement was satisfactory.

Music

Provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers' good subject knowledge encourages students to learn.
- Many more students are choosing GCSE music because the work is well matched to their interests and abilities.
- National Curriculum Levels are not used sufficiently to help to raise standards in Year 9.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is rarely used in Year 9.

Commentary

100. Standards in Year 9 are below average. However, this represents satisfactory achievement since the majority of students enter Year 9 with very few musical skills. All three students successfully gained A-C grades in the GCSE examination in 2003 but because of the small numbers entered comparisons with national statistics would not be realistic. In Year 11 students' present standards are average and their achievement is good compared with their prior attainment. The quality and enthusiasm of teaching is a key factor in improving the quality of learning. In the last two years the popularity of music has increased dramatically and there are now over 20 students in each of the examination classes.

101. Teaching and learning is satisfactory in Year 9. The teacher's good management of students has a positive influence on their attitudes and behaviour. This was seen in lower attaining classes practicing reggae chord patterns on rock instruments. Verbal and written assessment takes place but National Curriculum Levels are not used regularly or clearly displayed in the department. No students were seen using computers. Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to a strong commitment from students to learn well and make good progress. Since a variety of classical and pop styles are being taught students build up a broad and balanced knowledge of music. There are examples of compositions done on computer and recorded performances by students which show that they are being taught to appreciate dynamics, structure and contrast being taught.

102. Leadership of the subject is good and ensures that music has a high profile within the school. The jazz band is popular and combines both orchestral and rock instruments. Concerts and shows are now regular events at the school. There is sound management and a development plan with achievable targets that are geared towards raising standards. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education is the only subject in this area that the school offers and was inspected in full.

Physical education

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Students' results in the GCSE examination are in line with the national average and better than in most other subjects.
- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- Relationships with students are very good.
- The curriculum needs updating.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory; it gives too little information to students how they might improve.

Commentary

103. Students arrive at the school with a low level of skill and by the end of Year 9 their standards are below average. Their achievement is satisfactory. Results in the GCSE examination in 2003 were in line with national averages and have improved in the last two years. Students achieve well throughout Years 10 and 11, where standards are average and sometimes above. In Year 11 standards vary in the range of activities taught. In the GCSE course, students' written work is average but their practical work is below average where their knowledge and understanding of games is insufficient in netball and trampolining. In theory work students in Year 10 have difficulty in recalling previous learning, which is not helped by some immature attitudes. Students with special educational needs are integrated into all lessons and achieve well.

104. Teaching and learning are good overall and a third of lessons were very good. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. The quality of learning of some students in Year 9 is not good enough because of their poor attitudes. Teachers plan lessons well and subject knowledge of the activities taught is good. Teachers form very good relationships with their students and this has contributed to the improvement in students' attitudes to their work. There are few non-participants in lessons except in Year 10, where some girls are still reluctant to take part enthusiastically. The attitudes of students in Year 11 are particularly good and they achieve well as a result. Homework is set regularly but the marking of work for GCSE is unsatisfactory. There are no comments to help students to improve, no targets and no grades of work completed. Students are not aware of the progress they are making compared to their predicted grades for the examination. A range of extra-curricular activities is available to students but participation is still low.

105. Leadership and management are good. There are two enthusiastic subject leaders who are committed to raising standards and are good role models for students. They are recent appointments and are making a positive contribution to raising the profile of physical education in a department which was neglected. Schemes of work are out of date and do not reflect the recommendations of Curriculum 2000. Assessment is unsatisfactory and reports to parents do not indicate what students know, understand and can do in the activities taught. Accommodation is satisfactory but there is no departmental office for administration or the storing of documentation for the department. Resources, particularly for games, are unsatisfactory.

106. Since the previous inspection standards have risen but assessment is still unsatisfactory. Improvement has been satisfactory.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

No subjects in this area were inspected.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is the only subject in this area and was inspected in full.

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

107. The school has not yet implemented National Curriculum requirements for citizenship. No lessons of citizenship were observed during the inspection. An audit of provision across the school has been undertaken but there is no systematic planning or teaching of the subject. Some aspects of citizenship are to be found in the personal, social and health education course but these are not taught according to the three key elements of the citizenship curriculum. Plans are being made to put the citizenship curriculum in place but currently the school is not meeting its statutory requirements in this area.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

108. In the inspection, six 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.

109. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

Level 3 GCE AS Level courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Chemistry | 5 | 60 | 84.8 | 0 | 36.9 | 20 | 35.2 |
| History | 8 | 0 | 91.8 | 0 | 37.2 | 0 | 37.8 |
| Information technology | 9 | 66.7 | 78.2 | 0 | 20.6 | 14.4 | 28.5 |
| Other sciences | 6 | 66.7 | 83.4 | 0 | 32.3 | 15 | 33.4 |
| Physics | 9 | 11.1 | 82 | 0 | 36.2 | 2.2 | 34.3 |

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 | 6 | 100 | 98.5 | 0 | 43.7 | 70 | 84.3 |
| Sociology | 8 | 100 | 95.4 | 37.5 | 39.6 | 77.5 | 79.1 |
| Information technology | 10 | 100 | 89.1 | 40 | 22.4 | 70 | 64.1 |
| Mathematics | 5 | 80 | 93.3 | 20 | 52.2 | 56 | 84.7 |

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English language was inspected. No other subjects were seen.

English

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning are leading to improved standards.
- Good leadership and management have ensured consistency and continuity of learning.
- Year 12 students do not take sufficient responsibility for independent learning.
- There are insufficient resources to support students' background reading.

Commentary

110. Standards in English are below average. Results in AS and A Level English literature and English language courses in 2003 are below the national average with no students attaining the highest grades. Standards currently in Years 12 and 13 are closer to expectations. Based on prior attainment, students' achievement is satisfactory. Although no students achieved the highest grades at AS or A Level in 2003, there is evidence of higher achievement in work seen. There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls.

111. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and convey their enthusiasm for the subject. They reinforce the terminology of the subject and essay techniques very well. Students are also given very good guidance in research methods, particularly for their individual studies in English language. Teachers employ a good variety of groupings and activities that ensure that all students participate actively in discussion. Good marking, assessment, support and guidance ensure that students have a clear idea of how to improve. However, there are not high enough expectations of Year 12 students to read independently and to arrive promptly and prepared for lessons. Several changes of teachers also adversely affected students' learning and achievement in 2003.

112. Curriculum leadership is good. Good contingency planning and redeployment of teachers have minimised the effect of teachers' absence and illness this year. However, there are insufficient resources within the English department and school library to support students' background reading.

113. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained and there is now a wider choice for students as both English literature and English language courses are offered.

114. Standards of language and literacy in the Sixth Form are average. Teachers insist on the correct use of the vocabulary and terminology of their subjects. However some Year 12 students need to be encouraged to read independently and more widely.

MATHEMATICS

Only mathematics was inspected in this area.

Mathematics

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, so students achieve well.
- Year 13 students have good independent study skills.
- The mathematical methods module in Year 12 is particularly helpful to students with below average abilities.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used well enough in the teaching.
- Students' oral contributions in lessons are brief, which limits their learning.

Commentary

115. In 2003 the number of students completing the GCE A Level course was too small for reliable national comparisons. Grades ranged from the highest A grade to unclassified for the five students who completed the course. Standards were average for the fifteen students completing the AS Level examination at the end of Year 12. A notable feature of these results is the wide range in standards; these reflect the below average standards that students have at the start of the course.

116. Current standards in Year 13 are average. This represents good achievement by these students, due to the good teaching they receive and the good levels of independent study they have developed during their course. Students with intermediate Level GCSE standards on entry find the pure mathematics modules difficult, as their algebraic skills are not good enough. They also achieve well.

117. Teaching and learning are good. The strength of teaching lies in the good subject expertise of the teachers and their good planning of lessons. Students receive helpful encouragement and teachers provide good individual support, both in lessons and at other times according to needs. As a result students' independent study levels develop to become good in Year 13. Computers are not used well enough in teaching, in graph work, for example. Questions are used to good effect in the teaching but do not encourage students sufficiently to take part in extended whole class discussions, necessary for better understanding in mathematics.

118. Leadership and management are good, providing a good framework for students learning A Level mathematics. The curriculum is good, as the mathematical methods module gives students starting the course from an intermediate qualification in GCSE mathematics every opportunity to improve the basic skills required for success in pure mathematics. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

SCIENCE

The focus was on biology and no other subjects were seen.

Biology

Provision for biology is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, leading to improvements in standards.
- The leadership and management of the subject is good.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to further develop students' learning.
- Students' attitudes are positive and contribute to good achievement.
- Assessment data is used effectively to improve individual student performance.

Commentary

119. In the 2003 GCE A Level examination one of three candidates attained a grade in the A to E range, but the small number of students makes comparisons with the national average inappropriate. There were no candidates for the 2002 examinations. In the 2003 AS Level examinations half of the candidates achieved A to E grades and one achieved a B grade. These results are provisional because appeals have led to re-assessment. There were no significant differences in the attainment of girls and boys. Overall achievement is good and standards in Years 12 and 13 are in line with the national average.

120. Teaching and learning are good, which is helping to raise standards. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and make good use of independent and computer-based learning. During lively class discussions good questioning techniques help students to think hard. Invariably teachers' expectations are high, the pace is good and homework is used well to reinforce learning. In the best lessons students achieve well in relation to their prior learning. In one Year 12 lesson, students achieved well using simple modelling techniques in developing their understanding of how chromosomes behave. Assessment procedures are good and assessment data is used well to inform students of their progress and provide target grades. Feedback from marking and coursework helps students to improve and is greatly valued by them.

121. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The new course material provides very good opportunities for students to be actively engaged in learning and to use ICT constructively. This is having a positive effect on students' achievement. Opportunities for field study trips are well used to promote effective independent learning.

122. Since the time of the last inspection improvement has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology (ICT) was inspected in this area.

Information and communication technology

Provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is satisfactory in Year 13, but standards are below average.
- More focused teaching is beginning to raise standards in Years 12 and 13.
- Greater guidance to help students with course selection would raise standards.
- Good resources now offer wider opportunities to more students.
- Students' positive attitudes contribute to improving standards.

Commentary

123. Results in the external examinations in 2002 were below average, but standards of work are improving. However, current standards are still below average. Year 12 students have confidence in

using some of the advanced features of the software. Students write constructive evaluations of different uses of ICT applications, but not against any set criteria. They have a sound knowledge of a range of ICT applications, but are less confident in applying the principles in different situations. Achievement is satisfactory given the level of ICT attainment on entry to the Sixth Form.

124. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Planning is effective and tasks are set which match the requirements of the syllabus. Students are encouraged to manage their own learning and provided with sufficient resource materials. They have a positive approach to the subject and work with some enthusiasm and commitment. They extend their knowledge and skills but at a level which does not offer the most able the opportunity to make better progress. Teachers provide individual support and ensure students know how to improve. Satisfactory assessment ensures that students know how they are progressing and how to make improvements.

125. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Two different courses are appropriately provided through the consortium arrangements. However, more effective guidance in selection of the most appropriate course for the students would improve standards further.

126. Students in ICT lessons have access to a wide range of modern resources. There are examples of the good use of ICT in biology, where students use interactive software to extend their understanding of fertilisation. Sixth Form students use ICT to enhance the presentation of their coursework in physical education and English.

127. Students have benefited from improved resources and new courses implemented since the previous inspection, but standards have only improved slowly. Improvement has been satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

128. History, geography and religious education were sampled and one lesson was seen in each subject. In geography, generally good teaching was geared to providing the correct degree of challenge in continuing students' studies, but students' contributions were limited and, in consequence, the lesson was strongly teacher-led. The history lesson was satisfactory with strong encouragement from the teacher but too few opportunities for students to respond to questions. Access to suitable history textbooks was a problem. Religious education teaching was well structured and focused, stimulating students' interest. Good assessment and the use of target grades as well as positive attitudes promoted good learning.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

129. No subjects in this area were inspected in full. Design and technology was sampled and one lesson was seen. The focus was on product design. The teacher is skilled in being able to provide details of the requirements for gaining good examination grades. Although examination results have been below average, Year 12 students were observed to be producing good quality sketches for the development of ideas. This suggests good achievement at this early stage.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

130. Art and design, drama and music were sampled. In the two art and design lessons very good teaching was evident; a mature atmosphere encouraged high quality interactions between teachers and students, leading to very good achievement. One Year 13 drama lesson was seen. Standards were average; achievement was very good. Very good teaching included very effective planning, pace and a high level of challenge. Students were able to translate what they had learned about movement, gesture and speech into a very good performance of the text they had prepared. The two good music lessons, focusing on music technology, were notable for the teacher's good technical knowledge and the clear learning objectives, which encouraged students in their effective use of musical equipment. Achievement was good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Leisure and tourism and travel and tourism (which are reported jointly) and physical education were focus subject areas of the inspection.

Travel and tourism and leisure and tourism

Provision for leisure subjects is **satisfactory**.

Strengths and weaknesses:

- Subjects provide a progression route for students with varying prior attainment and these courses are open to all students.
- The subject develops students' independent learning skills.
- Teaching and learning does not focus sufficiently on learning outcomes.
- The management of the joint provision with the other consortium school is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

131. Two leisure subjects are offered to Sixth Form students. The courses are now jointly provided and taught by the two upper schools in the town. They are valuable in retaining Post 16 students who might otherwise be lost to further study and for those with a vocation to enter the travel industry. Travel and tourism is taken as an Advanced Level Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE).

132. Current standards are in line with expectations. Results in the past three years are broadly average but with very few candidates. Leisure and tourism is taken at intermediate GNVQ Level. Results have been above the national average, though with more pass grades than distinctions. Achievement is satisfactory given the prior attainment of the students.

133. Teaching is satisfactory, well planned and focused on unit requirements. There are weaknesses in the management of students, in providing appropriate challenge, and in ensuring that lesson objectives are completed and learning outcomes achieved. Raising levels of attainment requires better classroom management to eradicate immature behaviour and improve the focus of the students towards their studies and examination success. Learning is satisfactory, varying according to teaching style and the prior attainment or experience of the students. Independent learning is strong. Information and communication technology (ICT) research is good and competent. Students understand that they must not copy from internet or ICT sources but produce their own work. This serves them well in assessments, which are carefully managed.

134. Given the history of the course, the joint working between the two schools in the town and the larger numbers to deal with, leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is no one person in overall charge or with responsibility for raising standards, co-ordination, securing better resources and students' progress. Present arrangements are unclear to students and do not give a focused reference point. Teachers, who already have other responsibilities, are over-stretched in managing the subject. Improvement since the last inspection cannot be evaluated as these subjects were not offered at that time.

Physical Education

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Students achieve well because of positive attitudes.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Standards of written work are above average and results in the A Level examinations improved in 2003.
- Enrichment activities for students are limited.

Commentary

135. Two students sat the A Level examination in 2002 and achieved a D and E grade. In 2003 three students attained C grades; an improvement on past years. Current standards are average but written work is above average. In the personal exercise programmes, students show pride in their work and use word processing to enhance their presentation. There is evidence of good research. Students achieve well in their work. Their knowledge and understanding of training methods and that of energy systems is above average. They are aware of a range of tests for agility, reaction time and flexibility and build them into their training programmes of a range of sports. Students in Year 13 have a good understanding of stress in sport and know that some athletes 'choke' when stress levels are too high.

136. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very good command of the relevant subject areas for coverage of the course and have high expectations of students. The improvement in standards is due to the very good teaching. Homework is set regularly and marking is helpful and informative.

137. Leadership and management are good and the joint provision for students in co-operation with the partner school is proving beneficial for students. Targets for improvement are set with grades awarded for written work. In this respect, students are aware of the progress they are making throughout the course compared to their current predicted grades. Students take responsibility for the organisation of recreation activities but there are no arrangements by the schools for formally organised recreation or sporting opportunities. Improvement since the last inspection cannot be evaluated as physical education in the Sixth Form was not reported.

BUSINESS

138. Economics was sampled and one lesson seen. Clear focus on the demands of the examination ensures that students learn well. Relationships are good and levels of participation are high, to the benefit of students' learning.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

139. No subjects in this area were inspected.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

140. General studies was sampled and one lesson was seen. The course is taught after usual school hours and students attend voluntarily. Two staff and 39 students were present. Lively teaching promoted good discussion of whether it is ever right to take a life and students joined in enthusiastically, if a little noisily.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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