

INSPECTION REPORT

FULFORD SCHOOL

Fulford, York

LEA area: York

Unique reference number: 121684

Head teacher: Mr S Smith

Lead inspector: Mr B A Jones

Dates of inspection: 8 – 12 December 2003

Inspection number: 259771

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

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Terms used in this report

Students in Years 7,8 and 9 are at Key Stage 3, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools after Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at Key Stage 4 of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the sixth form, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students and students of all ages at school.

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1309
School address:	Fulfordgate Heslington Lane Fulford York
Postcode:	YO10 4FY
Telephone number:	01904 633300
Fax number:	01904 666400
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Dolben
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school with 1309 students on roll. There are 654 boys and 655 girls. The school has a large sixth form, comprising 257 students. Students are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, but overall above average in terms of socio-economic status. On entry, the intake is above average in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, standards are mainly average. There are seven students (0.5 per cent) whose mother tongue is not English and who are at an early stage of learning English, and around two per cent of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is slightly above average. Some four per cent take up their eligibility for free school meals, which is below average. Six per cent of students have special educational needs, mainly moderate learning difficulties or social, emotional or behavioural problems. This is below average. Around two per cent have statements of special educational need, which is average. Last year, some 31 students joined the school and 34 left, other than at the ages of 11 or 16. The school is now considerably larger than at the time of the previous inspection, and the sixth form has grown significantly.

The school has specialist Mathematics and Computing College status. It has been awarded the Investor in People award, (renewed in 2001) and is a Beacon School. The school has Sportsmark and it takes part in Pathfinder Enterprise, Project Trident and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18462	B. Jones	Lead inspector	
9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector	
30690	G. Allison	Team inspector	Information and communication technology. (ICT).
15079	A Boys	Team inspector	Science. Chemistry (sixth form).
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	Business studies. Provision for students with special educational needs.
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Art and design. English as an additional language (EAL).
11508	C. Griffin	Team inspector	English.
23480	M. Harding	Team inspector	History. Religious education.
20287	D Harris	Team inspector	Modern languages. French (sixth form).
20192	T. McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education. Leisure and recreation (sixth form).
10392	D. Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Geography
2079	T. Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology.
22985	J. Sparkes	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form).
1340	D. Wigley	Team inspector	Music. Citizenship.
8341	W. Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics.
33015	R. Winter	Team inspector	Geography (sixth form).

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the school is good and the school provides good value for money.

Teaching is good and students achieve well. Much of the work of the school is very good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well to attain standards that are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11: achievement is very good in English, history and design and technology.
- Both leadership and management are good, ensuring that improvement in standards is at the heart of the work of the school.
- Teaching is good and is mainly undertaken by specialists who have very good command of their subjects.
- Students behave very well and have very positive attitudes. These attitudes, and the support their parents give, are important factors in their good learning.
- Students receive very good pastoral care and their personal development is very good.
- The school is very inclusive and students such as those with special educational needs achieve very well because they are fully integrated in the life of the school.
- The induction of new teachers to the school and the contribution to training new entrants to the profession are excellent.
- Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 do not give students enough information on how they compare to national standards and what they must do to improve against these benchmarks.
- Reports to parents do not inform them about what students know, understand and can do, and what they should do to improve further.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation in parts of the school is a barrier to further improvement.

The school has made good improvement since its previous inspection. Well above average standards have been maintained, teaching is better and the higher numbers of students are benefiting from an expanded curriculum that offers good choice. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		All schools			Similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	-	A	N/A	

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

Achievement is good. The examination results indicated in the table above show that this group of students performed better than those in schools with whom they were broadly comparable in terms of attainment at the end of Year 9. Results are well above average. Standards seen in the inspection are above average at the end of Year 9, and well above average in Year 11 and in the sixth form. Students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11. Students with special educational needs and the highest attaining students achieve very well. Students whose mother tongue is not English achieve well, in line with their peers. There are no significant differences in the standards of boys and girls.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and their attendance is well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good in all years in the main school. There is a high level of consistency to the amount of good and very good teaching and there is a significant amount of excellent teaching throughout Years 7 to 11. As a result, learning is consistently good. The very positive qualities that students bring to their learning and the support they receive at home are significant in their good achievement.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs and aspirations of students. Pastoral care in the school is very good because the very good relationships between teachers and students support personal development and academic progress very well. Students receive good, well-informed advice and guidance so that they take courses that best meet their choices and fit their individual needs. The school has very good links with other schools and colleges, and the very good links with the local and wider community enhance students' opportunities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are both good. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff at senior and middle management levels is good. The school is managed well. Governors do a good job overall, but the school does not comply fully in providing an act of collective worship on a daily basis.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting, supplemented by interviews held during the inspection. Parents are highly supportive of the school. Their children settle well and like school. They are pleased with the teaching standards and high expectations that enable their children to make good progress. The parents' and teachers' association thrives and the school is heavily oversubscribed. Students are good ambassadors for the school. They like the good teaching, challenging work and the support that most teachers give them. Many students do not like the lunchtime arrangements and would like to return to the old timetable, which gave a longer lunch break.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Make greater use of National Curriculum levels in marking and reporting in order to inform students and their parents on how students' progress compares to national standards and what they must do to improve further.
- In reporting to parents, give more detail about what students know, understand and can do, and what they should do to improve further
- Continue to improve accommodation in the parts of the school where it is a barrier to further improvement, both in the main school and the sixth form

Sixth form

- Ensure that students understand and appreciate that their views are valued.
- Ensure that registration procedures inform which students are in school in the case of an emergency

and, to meet statutory requirements, provide a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT FULFORD SCHOOL	
The sixth form is larger than most other sixth forms. The number of courses provided has been successfully expanded to meet the needs of all sixth form students at the school.	

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is very good. Its cost effectiveness, too, is very good.
Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are well above average and students achieve very well: achievement in business studies is excellent because of the outstanding provision in the department.
- Teaching is very good overall, leading to very good learning.
- Students' excellent behaviour, their very positive attitudes and good parental support are major factors in their very good achievement.
- Leadership and management are both good and ensure that improvements in standards are maintained as a first priority.
- The regular and effective reviews of students' progress ensure that they meet their targets and parents are fully informed about their progress.
- The curriculum is very good and meets the needs and aspirations of students very well: the integrated studies course is very effective in widening curricular opportunities for students.
- Students receive very good pastoral care and are supported well in most aspects of their school life. However, they feel that their views are not listened to sufficiently, nor acted upon.
- Accommodation in some areas is unsatisfactory and restricts teachers in their using a variety of styles to improve students' learning.
- Registration procedures do not ensure that the school knows which students are in school in the case of an emergency.

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 language very good. Standards are well above average. Students are enthused by very good teaching, resulting in very good achievement. French very good. Students achieve well because of highly proficient teaching. Standards are well above average. In sampled work in German , students are achieving very well in response to the very good teaching they receive. Standards are well above average.
Mathematics	Mathematics very good. The high level of subject specialist knowledge of the teachers ensures that students make very good progress and are prepared well for their examinations. They achieve very well and standards are well above average by Year 13.
Science	Biology very good. Very good teaching and learning, resulting in highly motivated students and well above average standards. Chemistry good. Students achieve well because of good teaching and their own very good attitudes to their study. Sampled work in physics showed good achievement and above average standards. Teaching is good.
ICT	ICT good. Students achieve well because of the good teaching and the very good attitudes they bring to the subject. Standards are above average.
Humanities	Geography good. Good teaching and learning and very good students' attitudes are bringing good achievement and above average standards. History very good. A very popular subject that is very well taught and where students

	achieve very well and standards are above average. Sampled work in psychology showed good teaching and above average standards. Students achieve well. In religious education , students achieve well in response to good teaching overall in the work sampled. Two lessons in government and politics were observed where students were taught very well and their achievement is very good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Design and technology good. Students' excellent attitudes make the most of very good teaching and students achieve well.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design very good. Very good and enthusiastic teaching capitalises upon students' talents. Students work hard, achieve very well and enjoy their art. Standards are well above average. In a Year 13 sampled theatre studies lesson, teaching and learning were very good. Students achieved well and reached above average standards. In music , sampled lessons in Years 12 and 13 were very good and students are achieving well. In film studies , in an excellent Year 12 lesson, students made outstanding progress.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Leisure and recreation good. Standards are below average, but students achieve well in relation to their starting points because of good teaching and their own very good attitudes. In one travel and tourism sampled lesson, teaching and learning were very good and students achieved very well.
Business	Business studies excellent. Students starting from a wide range of starting points enjoy excellent achievement. Teaching is excellent and ensures a wide range of different learning opportunities including outstanding use of ICT.

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 school reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school provides very good support, advice and guidance based on very effective monitoring. The very good relationships with subject teachers and tutors are very supportive and helpful. Students new to the sixth form settle very well and good care is given to individuals who need extra support. Individual target setting enables students to achieve very well. There is very good support for university applications. Health and safety procedures are generally good, but there is no accurate record of students on site, which is essential in the event of an emergency.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are both good. The heads of year and the team of teachers maintain high expectations of the students with regard to their personal development and their studies. The sixth form is very popular and continues to grow.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students like the sixth form. They appreciate the high expectations and challenge they receive from accessible and helpful teachers. In their questionnaire responses they agreed the school's provision suits their abilities and their career plans. A high proportion of students in Year 12 were critical of careers advice, but they have not yet received careers advice in the sixth form. A high proportion stated that there is not an adult in school who knows them well but the inspection team could not substantiate this in subsequent interviews with students. Many students feel that their views and requests are not listened to adequately and that the mechanisms for consultation give them insufficient involvement in the work and development of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

The main school

Students join the school with levels of attainment that are above average in English, mathematics and science, although students currently in Year 7 have results in their Year 6 national tests in these subjects that are well above average. In other subjects, standards are mainly average on entry. By the time students leave Year 11, standards overall are well above average, reflecting students' good achievement. Parents are satisfied with the standards the school obtains and students, too, express their satisfaction with the quality of education they receive.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 7 to 9, students achieve very well in English, design and technology, history and religious education. In nearly all other subjects, students achieve well.
- In Year 10 and 11, students achieve very well in English, design and technology, history, art and design and business studies. Achievement is good in all other subjects.
- By Year 11, standards are well above average in most subjects and above average in all others except information and communication technology (ICT), where standards are average.
- Students' good attendance, their very good behaviour, very positive attitudes and the support they receive from home are important factors in students' levels of achievement.
- Students achieve well because of their positive response to the good teaching they receive.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards overall are above average and students achieve well. In English, mathematics and history, standards are well above average. In all other subjects, including science, standards are above average. When account is taken of the starting points of these students in Year 7, which was average in most subjects and below average in design and technology, they achieve well. They achieve very well in English, design and technology, history and religious education. Students achieve satisfactorily in modern foreign languages, despite the limitations in the taught time they receive in Year 9.
2. There is a similar pattern to achievement by the end of Year 11. Overall, students achieve well and reach well above average standards in the majority of subjects. Standards in ICT are an exception and here, standards are average. This is because provision in previous years left current Year 11 students well below average in their attainment. The school identified the problem and has redressed the balance in provision and students now achieve well and standards are rising. Better time allocation than in Years 7 to 9 allows students to achieve well in modern foreign languages. In business studies courses, students achieve very well and attain standards that are well above average. Overall, the level of students' achievement is clearly linked to the good teaching they receive throughout Years 7 to 11. This builds on the very good support students receive from home and their own very good behaviour and very positive attitudes. There is little difference between girls' and boys' attainment and achievement at the end of Year 9. The difference between girls and boys is more marked at GCSE, where more girls attain at highest grades and do better overall. The gap, however, is close to the national difference. The gap is narrower at AS and A level, with more boys attaining at the highest grades. At all levels, girls' and boys' attainment is higher than for girls and boys nationally.
3. Standards of literacy are well above average. Students are fluent in their spoken expression and their writing. Most students are very fluent readers and able to skim and scan material briskly to find relevant information. Those with below average reading skills still achieve very well through effectively devised programmes that meet their needs. Their well-developed skills ensure that students have full access to the curriculum and that they are able to respond to the learning demands that are made of them. Standards of numeracy are well above average.

Students attain above average standards in ICT by Year 9 despite their having had limited formal teaching of ICT in Years 7 and 8. Year 11 students do not follow examination courses. However, most have average ICT skills that are used effectively in other subjects. Students in Year 10 follow a GCSE course and are currently working at average levels of attainment and are achieving well.

4. The very highest attaining students and those who are gifted and talented achieve very well. This is because teachers plan their work effectively to challenge them. They are also given very good additional challenges through extra-curricular work and opportunities to study additional subjects, such as statistics. The achievement of students with English as an additional language is good overall. Students who enter school with little or no English make rapid progress in learning the language as they have additional English lessons and close support from teachers and assistants to help them in lessons where there is heavier focus on spoken and written language. They attain as well as their peers in practical and physical subjects, but lower than their peers when the technical language used for subjects, such as history, geography and science, is difficult for them to translate.
5. The small proportion of students with special educational needs achieve very well because of the very good provision. Overall, students make very good progress in the gains made in test results between Year 6 and Year 9 with statemented students making the best progress. At the end of Year 11, students with statements gained an average of six GCSE passes in 2003, with a third of passes at grades A*-C. There were some very good results by individual statemented students and other students without statements gained an average of eight passes.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.6 (35.9)	33.3 (33.0)
Mathematics	39.7 (39.2)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	39.9 (35.7)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 224 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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	80.8 (76.5)	51.5 (49.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96.2 (96.8)	90.5 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99.5 (98.0)	95.9 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	44.3 (42.9)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 192 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. When account is taken of the standards on entry, the value added was very good and this group of students achieved very well. Overall results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average, (specific subject reports in all but the core subjects of English, mathematics and science describe 2002 results against national averages because validated data relating to 2003 results are not yet available). In both years, students achieved very well in relation to their starting points and the school exceeded its targets and maintained an upward trend in results in both National Curriculum tests and at GCSE.

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with above average levels of attainment. Year 13 students in the Year 2002 gained results that were well above average and female students' results were in the top five per cent nationally. These students achieved very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- At this stage in their courses, standards are well above average in the majority of work seen during the inspection.
- Students' achievement in business studies is excellent and is very good in most other subjects.
- Standards are well above average because students receive very good teaching.
- Students achieve as well as they do because of their positive attitudes, their maturity and the very good support they receive at home.
- Standards in leisure and recreation are below average, but students are achieving well from a well below average starting point.

Commentary

7. During the inspection, work seen in the 12 subjects inspected, which included the relatively weaker subjects and excluded some of the stronger subjects, was well above average overall. In the courses focused on, students achieve very well in most subjects. In chemistry, ICT, geography and leisure and recreation, achievement is good. In business studies, achievement is excellent. In the work seen, students are on line to reach targets set that match the well above average results attained in GCE A-level examinations in the last two years. There is a similar pattern to the work seen in Year 12 and in the level of students' achievement. Where standards are average, in design and technology, ICT and leisure and recreation, achievement is still good. The small number of students with special educational needs make very good progress because of the high quality individual support they receive and because of very good teaching. Key skills are not taught separately, but the good and often very good contribution made by subjects ensures that standards are above average overall and students acquire the skills necessary to meet the demands of the courses they follow.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.4	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	52.4	39.4
Average point score per student	347.5	263.3

There were 141 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

8. Results in the 2002 examinations were well above average for male students and in the top five per cent nationally for female students. As yet unvalidated results for 2003 reflect similar standards and very good achievement on the part of the student group.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The main school

Students' attitudes to work and their relationships with each other and with staff are very good. This is a strength of the school. Behaviour is very good and exclusions are low. Attendance is well above average and unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. Punctuality is satisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. The level of exclusions is low.
- Attitudes are very good. Students are very well motivated and keen to learn.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good. The school's promotion of good relationships and racial harmony is excellent.
- The personal development of students is very good.
- Students are keen to be involved in school activities and exercise responsibility with maturity.
- Students enjoy school. Attendance is well above average.

Commentary

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1165	28	
White – Irish	2		
White – any other White background	42		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5		
Mixed – White and Black African	3	2	
Mixed – White and Asian	14		
Mixed – any other mixed background	4		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	8		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	9		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2		
Black or Black British – African	2		
Chinese	6		
Any other ethnic group	7		
No ethnic group recorded	31	4	

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

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good as it was during the previous inspection. Exclusions are low. These have been for smoking, drug possession, theft and verbal abuse. Staff have high expectations of good behaviour to which students respond very well. Discipline is strict but usually fair and consistent. Students are mostly honest and trustworthy, although there have been incidents of theft in school. In general, they respect both the school's and each other's property. Relationships across the school are very good and students support each other's learning very well. Students are considerate, polite and helpful to each other and to adults in the school.
- The school has an excellent approach to promoting good relationships and students of different religious or ethnic backgrounds, sex or ability get on very well together. There is a high awareness of bullying and racism. Staff deal promptly and effectively with all reported incidents and this results in a harmonious learning atmosphere. Students with English as an additional language have very good attitudes towards work, make friends quickly and behave very well in

school. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into all aspects of the life of the school. All students display very positive attitudes.

11. Students learn well as a result of their continuing very good attitudes. They are confident and enthusiastic learners who work hard to achieve their best. Attitudes are only unsatisfactory in a few Year 10 lessons where teaching is insufficiently stimulating. Students voice their views and opinions confidently in lessons and have a mature and thoughtful approach to learning. Students are keen to accept community responsibilities, such as taking part in sports matches and standing for the school council. They give excellent support to a wide variety of charities and fund-raising activities, especially Amnesty International. Involvement in extra-curricular activities is good as is participation in day and residential visits outside school where students represent the school very well.

12. The overall impact on students' personal development of provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good. Although most subject areas do not have formal policies for including these aspects of education into their schemes of work; there is overall good provision, particularly in citizenship and religious education, and excellent provision through a large range of extra-curricular activities. Students' spiritual development is very good. Opportunities are provided for them to visit different religious centres and these enable them to confidently compare and contrast different religions of the world. The school provides very good opportunities for students' moral development. Through citizenship programmes for example, students address global moral issues of human rights, democracy and dictatorships. Students respect each other around the school, and are developing strong codes of ethics through links with the community. Students' social development is very good, and they have a strong sense of community responsibility. Large sums of money are raised for charity. There are very close links with the local community, which foster community care with, for example, the elderly. Students take on responsibility willingly, taking part, and being highly successful in national student debates. Students' cultural development is very good. Focus upon cultures of the world is made through religious education, art and music, particularly, and a multicultural day last year included students gaining experiences in Indian cooking and dancing, and in African drumming.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.8 (5.7 in 2001/2)
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.8 (0.9 in 2001/2)
National data	1.2

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

13. Attendance continues to be well above average and unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. Punctuality is satisfactory. Attendance in 2002/3 was similar to that in 2001/2. Students enjoy coming to school where they feel safe and secure and follow courses suited to their needs and interests. The school has excellent systems to monitor and promote good attendance and parents support this rigorous approach. Punctuality is satisfactory.

Sixth form

Attitudes to learning are very good and behaviour is excellent. Students are very well motivated and have a mature and independent approach to their work, in response to teachers' high expectations. They contribute significantly to the life of the school. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good attitudes and behaviour is excellent.
- Students like the courses available and are keen to make the most of their opportunities.
- Relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good.
- Students make a very good contribution to the school and wider community. They are good role models for younger students.
- Attendance is very good.
- Students enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities provided by the school.

Commentary

14. Students' very good attitudes and excellent behaviour contribute very positively to their learning. Students' are very positive about their sixth form education. They have a mature approach to work and are very well motivated to achieve in their chosen subjects. Students take increasing responsibility for their own research and learning. Different groups of students get on very well together. The excellent relationships between students and with teachers are supportive and the very good collaboration helps students make very good progress. They nearly all complete their chosen courses and these very good attitudes enable them to continue their learning in adult life. Students are punctual and attendance is very good. Good procedures are in place to encourage good attendance to lessons.
15. Students make a significant contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. The school makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of sixth form students. Students are keen to accept responsibility. They provide very good role models for younger students, taking the lead in organising fund-raising events for charity and supporting the learning of younger students through peer mentoring, paired reading and helping on Year 7 activity days. Students gain a good understanding of citizenship and democracy through the student council and community service such as supporting the development of debating skills in primary schools. Students make the most of their opportunities to extend their learning via day and residential visits out of school and in extra-curricular activities. A residential visit for Year 12 early in the term helps students to form supportive relationships with one another. They enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities provided in integrated studies. Students become independent, mature and responsible adults. They are very well prepared for life as citizens in modern society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The main school

The school provides a good education. The quality of teaching, the use of assessment and the curriculum are all of a good quality. Pastoral care is very good. There are satisfactory links with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good and leads to good learning. Students' very positive approach to learning and the support they receive from home are significant factors in their good achievement. The assessment of students' work is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a high level of consistency in the amount of good and very good teaching across the curriculum and across all years.
- There is a significant element of excellent teaching in the school.
- The very good match of teachers to the curriculum ensures that teachers have a high degree of subject specialist knowledge and enthusiasm for teaching it.
- Learning is good because of the very positive qualities students bring to their studies seen in their very good behaviour.
- Teachers do not use National Curriculum levels enough in their marking to inform students about their progress against national standards.
- There is no whole-school approach to teaching numeracy skills.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 137 lessons in Years 7 to 11

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (5%)	52 (38%)	59 (43%)	18 (13%)	1 (1%)	0	0

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

Commentary

16. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in nearly all subjects and is very good in English, history and religious education. This ensures that good learning takes place in most lessons. There is a consistency in the structure and planning of lessons that draws on national strategies and ensures that students understand what is expected of them. Teachers use a variety of approaches that engage students and keep their interests, capitalising on their very positive attitudes and keenness to do well. On occasion there is excellent teaching that stimulates and enthuses students, arousing their curiosity and demanding that they respond with their very best efforts.
17. No lessons were seen in Year 11, because these students were taking examinations during inspection week. However, interviews with students and extensive scrutiny of their work confirmed that they, too, receive good teaching. In Year 10, teaching is also good. Teachers' expectations are high and they demand a great deal. Students are clearly focused on achieving the best they can in their GCSE examinations and teachers use this to challenge and stretch them and ensure that good learning takes place. These demands are in accord with the students' own expectations and those of their parents. As a result, classrooms are characterised by a quiet orderly working atmosphere where achievement is valued and students want to learn. These qualities are appreciated highly by parents and students.
18. Throughout Years 7 to 11, teachers engender positive relationships between students, exemplified in their own good relationships with their students. This enables teachers to maintain a firm, but friendly approach in their teaching. As a result, teachers are able to use a variety of teaching methods that involve students taking responsibility for how well they learn. This fostering of independence works well among students throughout Years 7 to 11 and across the ability range. Typically, students work very hard and the atmosphere in lessons is one where humour can prevail and students can be trusted to work independently, whether on their own or in pairs or groups. All approaches are used successfully. Only rarely is behaviour

unsatisfactory and when this occurs, teachers have good strategies to ensure that the progress of the rest of the class is not adversely affected. On one occasion only did inspectors see unsatisfactory behaviour resulting in insufficient progress being made by the class as a whole.

19. Teachers have a very good level of subject expertise. They supplement this with a secure knowledge of the examination demands in their subjects. They plan well to help students acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding relating to their particular subjects. Students respect this and play their part by taking responsibility for their learning, for example, in the positive way they do their homework, and go further than the minimum in researching their work. Students also learn well from each other because they listen carefully. Teachers are good at requiring students to use the technical language of their subject. Thus, in question and answer activities, students will take on the response of another, question further and add their own contribution and, in the best practice, improve the answer.
20. Another feature that promotes the good learning that takes place is the mutual respect that exists between teachers and their students. Most teachers take good account of the needs of all students and adapt the work to meet these needs. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of students with learning difficulties and students from different backgrounds. Classes are organised so that boys or girls are not allowed to dominate in any one particular group by, for example, varying the seating arrangements in lessons. Some mathematics is taught in single-sex classes as a means of reducing differences in achievement.
21. Teachers are increasingly using ICT effectively, as befits a school with specialist mathematics and computer college status. Some excellent resources such as interactive white boards that bring computer technology into the classroom help them here. It is noticeable that where accommodation is unsatisfactory, the same opportunities are not afforded to the teaching of ICT skills. The school has successfully promoted the teaching of literacy skills by all teachers through their own subjects. This is not as true for the teaching of numeracy skills. At present there is no whole-school policy or approach to teaching these skills. As a result, opportunities are lost for students to see the relevance of numeracy in different subjects or improve their skills on a planned basis.
22. Specialist teaching of students with special educational needs is very good. Specialist local authority staff provide high quality individual tuition for students with different needs, including autism and specific learning difficulties. ICT is used very well with, for example, the use of programs designed to improve reading fluency. The integration of students with special educational needs in lesson activities is very good. The learning support team provide high quality support to individuals and groups and support staff are used well and are very effective. The quality of support given by teachers and assistants for students with English as an additional language, and who are not temporary residents in this country, is very good and ensures that they learn well. These students receive extra English lessons and additional close support in class. Students who are temporary residents benefit from some in-class support and receive additional lessons in English outside the curriculum.

The quality of assessment of students' work

23. Overall, assessment is good. A large amount of data is collected and recorded about students' attainment when they enter the school. This is used effectively to set targets for students and monitor students' progress as they move through the school. In this way, the school effectively identifies any potential underachieving students and put in place support systems to tackle the problem. Marking is thorough and constructive; comments are made to help students improve their work. Good procedures are in place to support students' achievement. However, teachers do not give students enough information on how they compare to national standards or what they must do to reach higher levels. For example, better use could be made of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 to assess students' work so that students know how well they are doing and what they must do to move on to the next level.

24. Subjects use data well to meet the needs of individual and different groups of students and to analyse the performance of different groups of students and individuals in external examinations. Identification procedures for students with special educational needs are very good, with full use made of feeder school information and testing on entry. Early identification of needs is excellent, with initial targets set at the start of Year 7 based upon information received. Individual plans have a clear, useful format and are regularly reviewed. Reviews are very well integrated into whole school procedures so that they occur at the same time as interim and final reports each year. Students are fully involved in review procedures. Statutory reviews for statemented students meet requirements. The monitoring of progress is very good, including attainment at the end of Year 9 compared with attainment on entry in Year 7. The school has refined its procedures so that students whose attainment is well below average can be monitored through nationally recognised methods.

Sixth form

Teaching in the sixth form is very good, as is assessment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good command of their subjects and an enthusiasm for teaching them.
- Teachers maintain high expectations of their students, resulting in a positive approach to learning by students.
- There is a high level of consistency in the good and very good teaching across the range of subjects seen and there is some excellent teaching.
- The high level of commitment of students and the maturity they bring to their studies help to ensure that learning is very good.
- Teachers assess and review students' work accurately, regularly and effectively to inform students and involve their parents in their progress.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 70 lessons in the sixth form.

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (10%)	38 (54%)	20 (29%)	5 (7%)	0	0	0

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

Commentary

25. Teaching is very good in most subjects across both Years 12 and 13; it is good in chemistry, ICT, geography and in leisure and recreation. In business studies, teaching is excellent. There is a very good match of teachers to the curriculum the school offers. As a result, teachers' subject knowledge and their good understanding of the examination demands of their areas, lead to very effective teaching, which prepares students very well and helps to ensure the well above average levels of examination success. Students with special educational needs are fully involved in lesson activities because of the high level of support that is very well matched to individual needs with, for example, the support assistant acting as scribe for note-taking. Very good teaching ensures that students with special educational needs receive the same level of challenge as their peers.

Example of outstanding practice

Using a variety of teaching strategies in the classroom, including ICT, to promote excellent learning. An account of part of a mathematics lesson for Year 12 students.

Year 12 students, studying a unit in statistics, were kept fully involved by a variety of stimulating teaching activities that led to excellent learning. The teacher challenged students to use their knowledge of statistics from GCSE to interpret two sets of data. The teacher stretched their skills of analysing information and communication through group work. Students became involved in lively discussion about the kinds of measures of location they could use, each group arriving at conclusions about the data. Conclusions were discussed with the students offering their ideas and the teacher developing their understanding of dispersion of data through very clearly targeted questioning. Skills, concepts and formulae were developed very effectively using the interactive white board. All students were fully engaged in the learning and they made excellent progress in increasing their understanding of key concepts of interpreting data. Activities were very well matched to students' needs and the ideas were taught in a highly effective way

26. The positive qualities in the teaching in the main school are also found in the sixth form because many teachers include both the main school and the sixth form in their teaching schedule. Students appreciate teachers' expertise, their conscientiousness in assessing their progress and their easy availability outside lesson time. Students bring a good level of maturity to their work and a keenness to do well. As a result, lessons are characterised by a shared commitment to hard work and good cooperation between students that results in a positive working atmosphere where learning is valued.

The quality of assessment of students' work

27. Assessment in the sixth form is very good. Results from GCSE examinations are used very well to set targets for GCE A-level examinations. Teachers use the information effectively to plan for the needs of individual and groups of students. The progress students make is checked regularly and targets are reviewed. Parents are kept informed and their involvement thus encouraged. They bring a positive and influential benefit to their children's learning as a result. Students are well informed about what they need to do to improve. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly in order to help students understand how they can improve as well as ensuring that students know how good their work is. Routine marking is better in the sixth form because teachers relate students' work more closely to external examination criteria and ensure that students are left with good knowledge of how to improve their work further in relation to these criteria.

The curriculum

The school provides a good range of learning opportunities across Years 7 to 13. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum are very good. Enrichment opportunities and resources are both good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of the curriculum is good in the great majority of subjects.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for work-related learning.
- Oversight of the curriculum by the school's governing body is very good.
- Accommodation problems reduce breadth and balance in some subjects.
- Time allocations within the new school day restrict breadth in some subjects.

Commentary

28. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements except for the provision of a daily act of collective worship. The time allocated to the curriculum is greater than at the last inspection and now meets national recommendations. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) has improved since the last inspection. It is now good and enhances the overall breadth and balance. ICT provision has continued to improve since the last inspection although the whole school co-ordination of both discrete courses and cross-curricular elements is not well established.
29. Breadth and balance in the physical education curriculum are restricted by there being only one indoor space for activities. The school has met all of its curriculum targets relating to its specialist college status and exceeded its whole-school targets. Work-related learning opportunities are a developing strength in the overall provision. The governing body provides rigorous oversight of the curriculum.
30. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced, containing all National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education. Most students study both French and German, although the time allocation is low and this has an adverse impact on standards. Breadth and balance in design and technology is restricted by the use of ICT facilities for a large proportion of lessons. This is a temporary problem to be resolved when current building work is completed. Breadth and balance are enhanced through the provision of ICT as a separate course and by the inclusion of library skills and drama within English.
31. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is enhanced through the provision of a newly introduced short course in ICT for all students. Students whose option choices deny them the opportunity to study a second modern foreign language can do so by attending lessons after school. There is a broad science curriculum with students directed to either dual award science or courses in three separate sciences. Breadth and balance is enhanced through the provision of option subjects with a strong vocational emphasis. Overall, there are good links between courses provided and those offered in the sixth form.
32. There is a good and comprehensive programme for PSHE, which is taught well by appropriately trained form tutors and enhanced by a good range of outside specialists. It contributes positively to students' personal development. Students in Years 10 and 11 also have lessons in social education that make a very good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. PSHE prepares students well for life after school.
33. The development in work-related learning is a strength in the overall provision. A small group of students are currently undertaking extended work placements. A larger group of students attends a college placement for one day each week. Individual students have very good opportunities to gain a wide range of accreditation relevant to the world of work. There are still some problems to be overcome in the organisation of this provision because, currently, some students miss parts of their chosen school courses when attending college.
34. Enrichment of the curriculum is good overall and very good in sport. Support for learning outside the school day is enhanced by the school's intranet, by opportunities to use the resource centre at the end of the school day, by examination revision sessions run by departments and by lunchtime homework clubs. There is a wide range of sports teams that compete with other schools, involving boys and girls in all year groups. Similarly, there are internal competitions held on a form basis in a wide range of sports. There are also interest groups and clubs in a variety of activities. In total over half the students in Years 7 to 11 take part in a sport-related activity on the school site outside of school hours. There is a very wide range of drama projects involving students in different year groups. Provision in modern foreign languages, including exchange visits, is very good.

35. All pupils have full access to the National Curriculum, although it is disapplied for a small number of students where it is considered that they benefit from following other programmes. A co-ordinator for able and talented pupils has been appointed and this work is developing well. Overall, the curriculum provides very good opportunities for all groups of pupils. Travellers' children are supported effectively and sensitively. The provision for students with special educational needs is very good. A key feature of the very good provision is the high quality of learning support. The quality of support is enhanced through training and professional development that has enabled individuals to gain relevant expertise. Overall provision is further enhanced through the involvement of specialist local authority support teachers who visit on a regular basis to support students with specific needs.
36. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school has very obviously outgrown its buildings, as at the time of the previous inspection. In many parts of the school, the unsatisfactory accommodation is a barrier to further improvement, but the positive approaches taken by staff and students ensure that standards and achievement are not currently being compromised. For some subjects, classrooms are either dispersed around the site, as in history and religious education, housed in leaking mobile classrooms where displayed work is spoiled in inclement weather, as in geography and religious education, lacking in either quantity and quality, as in English, or unsuitable for the subject, as in physical education and art and design. In only mathematics, science, business studies, design and technology and modern foreign languages is accommodation considered to be good and a positive influence on learning. Building is well advanced on a new block of teaching rooms, which should go some way to alleviating the pressure on space in some areas of the curriculum. The students, the staff and the governors of the school work very hard to do all that they reasonably can to ensure that the site and buildings appear attractive, clean and tidy, and well ordered and maintained because students and staff are rightly proud of their school.
37. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is very good. The level of subject qualification is also very good. The governors and the headteacher have no significant difficulties in recruiting high quality staff when vacancies occur, due to the very good reputation of the school. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum. The secretarial, clerical and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school. Resources to support learning are good. The resource centre and library are very well organised and efficiently managed. It is used well by the students from all year groups. The ICT provision in mathematics is very good, with interactive white boards in all teaching rooms. In other departments the availability and range of ICT equipment is satisfactory overall.

Sixth form

Sixth form provision is very good and there is a very extensive range of courses for students. The high staying-on rate into the sixth form and the successful rate of entry into higher education both confirm the effectiveness of the provision.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range and number of courses are very well matched to students' needs.
- Retention rates on courses are very high.
- Students have very good opportunities to extend their learning experiences through the school's integrated studies programme.

Commentary

38. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good in the sixth form. Statutory requirements are not met for the provision of a daily act of collective worship. There are very

good opportunities for progression from the very wide range of AS courses to A2. Retention rates for both Year 12 and Year 13 courses are very high. Students with special educational needs have equal access to the full range of courses provided because of very good teaching and high quality support for individuals. Opportunities for progression into higher education are also very good. Two-thirds of students from Year 11 last year chose to stay on into the sixth form, with 20 students joining from other schools. Some students choose to spend three years in the sixth form with provision very well matched to their needs. Over 90 per cent of sixth form students gain entry into higher education.

39. The very wide range of AS and A2 courses is striking in its range and variety and there is a good range of advanced vocational courses available. There are very good links between a number of courses and future career opportunities. Students with special educational needs have equal opportunities to follow a full range of courses. The school has been very effective in enhancing its facilities to meet individual needs, for example, through a very successful fund-raising campaign that resulted in the installation of a lift.
40. The school's integrated studies programme provides a very good range of opportunities for students to broaden their experience. The choice of activities changes in response to students' demand. Additional breadth is provided by a residential induction week for Year 12 students and by a general studies programme including religious education and physical education. PSHE in the sixth form supports personal development and academic progress well and prepares students well for life after school.
41. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The sixth form common room is too small for the number now on roll, and there is a shortage of study and teaching areas specifically designed to accommodate smaller groups of sixth form students. Many of the present teaching spaces restrict the teaching styles that can be used to further improve students' learning. The very positive attitudes of the students enable them to minimise the difficulties. In addition, resources are good and the courses are staffed by specialist teachers who provide a very good match to the requirements of the curriculum on offer. The positive approaches of both staff and students currently overcome the barriers that the accommodation presents to learning.

Care, guidance and support

The main school

The school takes satisfactory care of students' health and safety. Staff provide good support, advice and guidance based on effective monitoring, which has a positive impact on achievement. The school involves students in its work and development adequately through the school council.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. The very good relationships that exist between staff and students are very supportive.
- Child protection procedures are very good.
- There is a good induction programme for all new students.
- Students are provided with good advice and guidance that prepares them very well for life both in the sixth form and after school.
- Mentoring of Year 11 students has a significant impact on their achievement.
- Only a third of students take up their entitlement to an individual interview with the Connexions service.

Commentary

42. Procedures for dealing with students' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. First aid procedures are good and there is good support from the school nurse. Very good procedures are in place to deal with child protection issues. Good heed is paid to students' safety in lessons and on visits out of school. Most risk assessments are thorough but in some departments they have not yet been formalised. The health and safety policy is comprehensive and specific to the school with clearly outlined responsibilities. Internet service provision is safe and secure.
43. Pastoral procedures are very good and support individuals' needs very well. Students find staff approachable for help and guidance. Induction arrangements are well organised and students settle very well into school. Good extra support is given to students with special educational needs. Year 7 students have good support from classroom teaching assistants in their first term and from sixth form students who help with paired reading and activity days. Some individual students have significant needs. The school has ensured that staff training and equipment provided adequately support students' welfare needs, having due regard to safety requirements. Many of the students with special educational needs work very closely with support staff, with excellent relationships established. For some individual students, the very high level of dependency produces a very strong working relationship. On entry to the school, students with English as an additional language are assessed and the support they need is defined in order that they receive their entitlement to the curriculum. The school uses available funding appropriately to give additional teacher support. Students' progress is tracked carefully and letters and visits keep parents informed about it.
44. Form tutors establish very good relationships with their students to promote personal, social and academic development. Progress is tracked in order to provide targets for improvement each term, but standards are not related to national expectations. Staff, university students and business learning support mentors support Year 11 students very well and have a good impact on their achievement. Students like the points system of rewards that is used consistently by most teachers.
45. PSHE provides a comprehensive programme to guide students through school choices and prepares them very well for life in the sixth form and after school. Advice on option choice in Year 9 is satisfactory. The careers programme is sound but only a third of students take up their entitlement to an individual interview with Connexions. All Year 11 students undertake two weeks of well-organised work experience, which is enhanced by very good links with the community and support from parents. The sixth form course guide is comprehensive and very helpful with courses usefully related to career options. Students are also appropriately encouraged to look at options outside the sixth form. All students are interviewed before entry to the sixth form to ensure the correct choice of courses. Students are involved in setting and reviewing personal targets. Students are consulted about their views through the school council. Most teachers listen to them and welcome their comments and ideas. Many of the students interviewed said that they do not like the new school timetable and lunchtime arrangements. They do not like the girls' toilets being used by smokers and the school is considering ways of deterring this.

Sixth form

The school takes satisfactory care of students' welfare, health and safety. The personal and educational guidance and support to students is very good. Relationships with subject teachers and tutors are supportive and helpful. Students' views are sought from time to time, but students do not perceive the process as having enough effect.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The monitoring of sixth form students' presence on site is unsatisfactory.
- Students receive very good advice and guidance that prepares them very well for life in the sixth form.
- Students find teachers very approachable and helpful.
- Students receive very good support for applications to higher education, but are critical of careers advice.
- Processes for seeking the views of students are not perceived by them as having much effect.

Commentary

46. The school takes satisfactory care of the welfare, health and safety of students and procedures are common with the main school. The school's procedures to monitor students' presence on site during the day are unsatisfactory. In the event of an emergency evacuation, there is no accurate record of students who are on the site, although there are records of students in lessons. Monitoring of attendance in lessons is good.
47. Year 11 students receive good advice regarding entry to the sixth form. In the pre-inspection survey, a high percentage of students indicated that they do not feel there is an adult in the school who knows them well, but inspectors could not corroborate this in observations and interviews with students during inspection. Very good relationships exist between tutors and subject teachers and students. Interviews indicated that students are confident they have easy access to a teacher should they need particular help or advice. Careers advice in the sixth form is satisfactory. In the survey, a third of students were critical of careers advice, but subsequent interviews found most were confident that their chosen courses suit their ability and career plans. Careers interviews are available on request, but many do not take advantage of this. The small amount of free time means that students feel they have insufficient time to investigate career possibilities. Comprehensive and useful advice on further and higher education, training and employment is readily available. Students have very good support for university applications. The management team helps to organise some appropriate work experience and work shadowing programmes for sixth form students.
48. All students have PSHE lessons and most do general studies, where they are encouraged to debate moral and ethical issues. This contributes very positively to personal development and academic progress. Students are involved in setting their own targets for improvement. Students are mature, confident and self-assured by the time they leave school and are well prepared for adult life. Students enjoy the sixth form. They are positive about what the school provides and say that they like: the challenging and demanding teaching; helpful assessment of work; teachers' expert specialist knowledge in their subjects; worthwhile and regular homework; teachers are accessible and helpful and the choice of courses, which suit their abilities and career plans. Students are critical of the way the school seeks and responds to their views. They feel that processes for seeking the views of students in the sixth form are ineffective. Students' views are sought from time to time but students do not perceive them as having much effect. They feel their ideas are not listened to enough nor acted upon. When issues are taken to senior management, students do not know why some things find favour while others do not. This makes them less likely to make a genuine response to consultation.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Main School

The school has satisfactory links with parents and the involvement of parents has a very good impact on their children's learning. There are very good links with other schools, universities and with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive and the school is oversubscribed.
- Students' planners are used well to communicate between home and school.
- The parents' and teachers' association makes a very strong contribution to the work of the school.
- Links with the community are very good and enhance learning and personal development.
- The very good links with other local schools and universities make a strong contribution to wider partnerships.
- Students' annual reports are unsatisfactory. Comments are inconsistent and contain insufficient detail on how students can improve their work.
- The school does not provide parents with all the information it should.

Commentary

49. The school has satisfactory links with parents to enable them to support students' education. Parents are very positive about the school, which is popular and oversubscribed. They like the good teaching and high expectations that staff have and believe their children makes good progress. Several parents expressed their pleasure at the way in which their child had settled in school. Most of the information required is provided to parents in the governing body annual report to parents and prospectus, but parents are not informed of their right to withdraw their children from religious education or sex education. There is no information about the election of parent governors, nor information on arrangements for the admission of the disabled, steps taken to prevent disabled students being treated less favourably than other students and facilities for access for the disabled.
50. The 'Fulfordian' and the school's website are informative. Parents appreciate the way planners are used for communication. A significant number of parents do not feel well informed about progress. Interim reports allow them to monitor progress through the year, but standards are not related to national expectations. Students' annual reports are unsatisfactory. Comments are inconsistent between subjects. In the best examples, parents are informed about what students have studied, know and understand and subject specific targets are given to help students improve their work. Achievement is seldom related to national standards. Parental attendance at consultation evenings is variable according to the year group, but is very good in Year 9 when they wish to discuss option choices for example.
51. Parents find the school very approachable and any concerns or complaints are resolved effectively and sensitively. A small proportion of parents feel the school does not seek their views. The school does undertake regular surveys of parental satisfaction. Parental attendance at governing body annual meetings is very low. Parents support their children's learning very well at home and in school. The parents' and teachers' association makes a valuable contribution to the financial and social life of the school, as well as the personal development of students through their involvement in the association's events.
52. The school's very good links with the local and wider community greatly enhance students' learning and personal development and the school enjoys the confidence of all its local communities. The school enjoys a high standing in the local community and capitalises very well on resources within the community to improve students' learning. Strong links with

business and industry augment work experience and support the Year 11 mentoring programme. There are a good number of well-supported visits into the local community and abroad to enhance curriculum opportunities. There is good community use of the school's accommodation.

53. The school has very good links with other schools and colleges that significantly enhance support and guidance for the personal development of students. Transfer mechanisms from primary schools are effective and students settle well. There are some good curricular links with primary schools, for example, in mathematics and science. Good links with colleges ensure students are offered a wide range for work related courses. Management of the linked provision is satisfactory although there are some difficulties over timetabling. There are very good links with foreign schools to support language skills. As a Beacon school and through its mathematics and computing college status, the school provides very good support to a number of other primary, secondary and special schools to share resources and improve teaching skills. There are wide ranging sporting links with secondary schools. Good links with similar departments of other schools support management development, for example in careers. The school makes an excellent contribution to the initial training of teachers.

Sixth form

The school has good links with parents and very good links with the community and universities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good involvement of and support from parents.
- Regular progress reports ensure that students achieve very well.
- Very good links with the local community make a good contribution to students' learning and personal development.
- Very good links with colleges and universities support students' career development.

Commentary

54. Parents are well informed of academic progress and personal development in the sixth form. An appropriate cycle of reports and consultations keeps parents suitably informed of students' progress. The quality of reports is good and good information is given on how students can improve their work in most subjects. Good information is provided to parents about university applications.
55. The school's very good links with the local and wider community and with other schools enhance the learning and personal development of sixth form students. Students are actively involved in community service for example by helping to develop debating skills in primary schools. They raise large sums for local, national and international charities and participate in performances. A visit to the regional higher education conference and links with universities help them to make the right choice of future courses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The main school

The headteacher's good leadership, along with good support from governors and key staff, has ensured the continued direction and improvement of this effective and successful school. The school is managed well. Governance is good and the governing body plays an effective part in the school's development. The school does not fully comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's vision for the school, effectively shared and supported by governors and senior staff, has ensured continued improvement.
- There is a good review procedure in place to promote successful teaching.
- The school is very successful in appointing specialist teachers and providing excellent training for new entrants to the profession.
- Routine financial administration is very good in ensuring good value for money in the school's spending.
- The school's development plan does not present its priorities and vision clearly enough.
- The school's use of data to analyse what it has to do to improve further against national standards is not yet established well enough.

Commentary

56. It is a measure of the headteacher's good leadership that the school has moved forward successfully and improved its standards further since the time of the previous inspection. The status of Beacon School acknowledges the high standards achieved in past years and presents many opportunities for the professional development of staff. The award of Mathematics and Computing College specialist status has enabled the school to develop and improve in those two areas. The school is very effective in raising money by making successful bids, for example in improving accommodation. A significant initiative, too, has been the appointment of a senior member of staff to oversee the needs of different groups of students. As a result of this, the school is now very successful at integrating students with particular educational or physical needs into the life of the school. These initiatives, all accomplished in the past two years, are the fruits of the vision and energy of the headteacher and his strong team of senior staff.
57. The senior team provides good leadership and whole-hearted support for the headteacher. The team members are strong role models. As a result of their energy and commitment, the school has sought and received funding for important initiatives. Through a well-recognised system of oversight, senior staff encourage others to analyse and reflect on the work of their departments and areas of responsibility. Heads of department are held to account for their subject's performance and are expected to review continually the quality of teaching to ensure that standards are maintained and improved. This approach, together with good training and support, has led to the development of good leadership in these middle managers who have become more accountable and self-evaluating as a result. Leadership in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, history, art and design and business education is very good.
58. Strategic planning is satisfactory, but there is scope for improvement in sharpening its focus and providing more useful information to support decision-making. The school's development plan is an inclusive document that is largely shaped by department plans. There is a clear and well-established annual procedure for producing and approving the plan to which governors contribute at its final stage. However, the strategic plan does not take as its starting point the school's overarching aim of raising standards and achievement. The information does not provide enough detail about when the objectives are to be carried out, or how much they are likely to cost or who is responsible. While the school has addressed these issues, their presentation is not easily accessible by key staff or by governors in such a way as to help them make informed decisions.
59. Governors take an active role in the leadership of the school and their governance is good overall. They make a positive contribution to the decisions that help to shape the vision and direction of the school, particularly in the areas of developing accommodation, financial management and curriculum planning. The regular reporting that takes place ensures they are in a good position to hold the school to account for the standards and quality produced.

Governors act as a critical friend to the school, both challenging and supporting effectively, because they have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors have not ensured that the school fully meets the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship, but are positive in encouraging the school to plan to do so.

60. The school is managed well. There are satisfactory systems and strategies in place to review progress and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards. However, while the school gathers and uses data effectively to analyse its performance and to compare with other like institutions locally, it does not use the information well enough in making comparisons against national standards. The headteacher and other managers show good awareness of the importance of curricular innovation. Students, and parents are positive about the manner in which the school is led and managed. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is undertaken effectively. As a result, departments benefit from the dissemination and sharing of the best practice in teaching, leading to good provision overall and a good proportion of very good and excellent teaching.
61. The school leadership successfully promotes equal opportunities and full inclusivity. The school has an equal opportunities policy and policies on dealing with racial discrimination and ensuring racial equality. The co-ordinator for equal opportunities and inclusion provides very good leadership in ensuring that awareness of equality issues is high. The school's arrangements for ensuring equality of opportunity and monitoring the progress of different groups are very good overall, apart from the systems for monitoring the progress of students from different minority ethnic groups, which are not fully in place. Different groups within the school benefit from this approach. For example, there is a developing provision for the gifted and talented students that is very good. It is building further on the already existing approach to stretching and challenging the most able in the school. There are few extra resources for students with English as an additional language, but the school integrates these students fully, using what resources there are effectively to ensure that they achieve in line with their peers.
62. The whole-school approach to meeting the special educational needs of students is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator meets regularly with representatives from subject departments, with the designated member of the governing body and with external agencies. The very strong multi-agency approach is a key feature of the provision. The co-ordinator provides excellent leadership in driving forwards a strategy to support students. The role of support staff has been significantly enhanced by their professional development to enable them to acquire expertise in specific areas of need. Improvement from the last inspection is very good.
63. The school takes a very positive approach to performance management and procedures are very good, having been built upon its successful experiences dealing with Investors in People and appraisal. The process is fully implemented and has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. There are effective procedures in place for supporting the professional development of teachers. Priority is given to the training needs associated with the school development plan, departmental plans and those identified as a result of individual teachers' performance management reviews. The induction of staff new to the school is excellent and newly qualified teachers, in particular, receive a first class programme of mentoring, support and guidance, as well as meetings on a wide range of relevant whole-school topics. The school is also an excellent provider for initial teacher training.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,226,439
Total expenditure	4,017,847
Expenditure per student	3,095

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	115,058
Balance carried forward to the next	208,592

64. Financial planning and management are very good. The procedures ensure that educational priorities are costed appropriately, but they are not presented clearly enough in the school development plan. The principles of best value are applied carefully and effectively. There are effective procedures in place to ensure that the school consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. Specific funds are used appropriately. The seemingly large balance carried forward contains earmarked funds accounted for in building works already contracted at that point. When account is taken of this, the balance is modest and appropriate.

Sixth form

Both the leadership and the management of the sixth form are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The close involvement of the senior leadership team ensures good support for the sixth form heads of years.
- The well-planned expansion of sixth form provision has enabled a very good curriculum to be put into place.
- The appointment of specialist teachers ensures very good quality teaching and very good achievement by students.
- Registration procedures present a health and safety concern.
- Students feel that their views are not listened to or acted upon.

Commentary

65. Leadership of the sixth form is good. The sixth form's strong reputation locally and the maintenance of high standards at GCE A-level have combined to ensure that it is a popular choice for students post-16. This popularity has been further augmented by the expansion of the curriculum to include more vocational subjects as well as those, such as government and politics, which are not offered at GCSE. These factors have led to a growth in sixth form numbers. However, this growth has not been matched by an expansion in the social space available for sixth form students whose common room area is currently inadequate for the numbers using it. The fact that a large majority of students stay on at the school after Year 11, and are joined in Year 12 by a significant number from other schools, reflects the high regard in which the sixth form is held both within the school itself and in the local community. Review procedures are very good and self-evaluation relating to students' progress is very good. The school monitors performance data effectively and takes action to keep students and departments on course with their targets.
66. Day-to-day management of the sixth form is good. Students are very satisfied with the provision they receive and state that the sixth form is well run. Arrangements for the oversight and guidance of sixth form students work well. Staff in charge of each year group communicate effectively with each other and with form tutors and have formed a strong team that looks after the needs of students well. Students themselves appreciate the support and guidance they receive both academic and pastoral. The close liaison that takes place between heads of year and the senior member of staff with oversight of the sixth form, ensures that the needs of students are brought up and discussed at the most senior level. Sixth form leaders

take into account the views of students and a number of actions have resulted from this, such as the redecoration of the common room by staff and students. In spite of this, however, students have the strong perception that the school takes little account of their views.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very Good	Very good

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' very high expectations result in students' very good learning and achievement.
- Students are highly motivated by the teachers' enthusiasm and subject expertise.
- Both the leadership and management of the subject are very good
- Despite significant strengths in marking, some aspects of assessment require improvement.

Commentary.

Examination results

67. Students enter the school with above average standards. Results were well above average in the 2003 Year 9 national tests. They were also well above average in 2003 GCSE English and English literature examinations from an entry rate significantly higher than in most schools. Both the Year 9 and GCSE results are significantly better than expected given the students' previous national test results.

Standards and achievement

68. Standards in Year 9 and 11 are well above average so maintaining the standards gained in examinations during recent years. Through Years 7 to 9 students achieve very well to attain these standards and maintain very good levels of achievement through Years 10 and 11 in response to the very good teaching they receive. During Years 7 to 9 schemes of work and teaching are clearly focused on equipping the students with the skills required for subsequent success at GCSE. Consequently, most Year 9 students write extended pieces, which for example analyse the depiction of childhood in 'Walkabout' at a level appropriate to GCSE course work. Expression is mature; paragraphing coherent; accuracy secure; and use of quotation clearly relates to the demands of the title. These qualities are even more evident in Year 11 where more than eight out of ten students consistently reach A*-C standards in their writing. The cogency of analysis and the power of expression of the very highest attainers are very strong. Only a few lower attainers in Years 9 and 11 do not reach average standards, mainly because of weaknesses in written accuracy. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because of very good collaboration between all adults involved in their

learning. Students with English as an additional language achieve well overall, and those who receive in-class support achieve very well.

Teaching and learning

69. Teaching and learning are very good, enabling students to learn very well and maintain very good achievement through Years 7 to 11. No teaching observed was ever less than good. Significant strengths are the outstanding subject expertise of the teachers and their very high expectations. Consequently, lessons focus sharply on the improvement of language skills, including basic literacy skills, and the students receive a challenging menu of activities that improves their standards of writing, reading and speaking. At the same time the students' enthusiasm and application are enhanced by the teachers' enthusiastic - even passionate - teaching styles. So, most lessons are characterized by very good pace, challenge, behaviour and attitudes. Marking consistently supports learning very well through the specific recognition of strengths and targets for improvement. In Years 10 and 11 the students' awareness of how well they are doing in relation to their targets and of how to achieve them is enhanced by the teachers' overt use of grades and the GCSE mark scheme. The use of levels in Years 7 to 9 is less overt so students are not as clearly informed about their progress in relation to national standards as older students. Where teaching is very good or excellent, as opposed to good, teachers use time targets very well to inject challenging pace into lessons. They also use questioning techniques more effectively to stimulate open-ended discussion.

Leadership and management

70. The head of department's subject leadership is very good. Improvement since the previous inspection has also been very good. Teaching is stronger in Years 7 to 9 following a major revision of schemes of work which pooled the considerable expertise of all teachers. Teaching is successfully incorporating features of the National Literacy Strategy. The department's own initiatives to promote private reading are effective. Management is very good with very effective monitoring of teaching and learning. Examination results are very closely analyzed, but require a broader range of methods to inform both evaluation and target setting. Accommodation, deemed unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, remains so, but the positive approaches of staff and students ensure that the impact is minimised and standards are not compromised.

Drama

71. The 2003 GCSE results were well above average as they consistently have been in recent years. No Year 11 lessons could be observed during the inspection, but scrutinised written work and the teacher assessments show students are on target to sustain well above average standards. Year 10 students have made a successful start to the course and are working at well above average standards for this early stage of the course. The teaching, learning and achievement in a lesson that focused on the impact of movement, gesture and expression were very good. In Years 7 to 9 drama is taught during English lessons and supported well by a comprehensive curriculum programme. The subject makes a very good contribution to the students' enrichment experiences especially through performances, theatre visits and links with professional theatre groups and performers. The subject is well led and organized and at examination level, taught by staff with considerable expertise and experience.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

72. The school makes good provision for the development of literacy skills. The coordinator has made good use of National Literacy Strategy guidance that has been used to guide in-service training. There has been a clear and effective focus on writing for non-fiction and on group work following an audit of the work in subjects. Schemes of work include details about literacy development. There are effective monitoring strategies. A succinct written policy sets out clear expectations and guidance for teachers. There is a well-planned programme that effectively supports the literacy skills of lower attainers led by the co-ordinator for special needs. It uses a varied and imaginative range of materials including the national literacy progress units. The library is popular and promotes reading effectively for both boys and girls. A lunchtime paired reading scheme involving sixth formers and younger students is particularly effective.
73. In work seen, standards were well above average. Inspectors consistently noted the fluency of the students' spoken expression. Notable strengths were observed in history where teachers provide a lot of effective support to enhance the quality of the students' writing, which leads to highly effective outcomes. Students are secure in the accurate application of key vocabulary within subjects. Typical was their high level use of technical vocabulary in design technology. Most students are very fluent readers, able to skim and scan material briskly to find relevant information. Those with below average reading skills still achieve very well through effectively devised programmes that meet their needs.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages (French and German) is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in French at GCSE continue to rise and in 2003, results further improved on the well above average results of 2002.
- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 and students' very positive attitudes ensure that they achieve well in French and German.
- Teachers are all highly qualified linguists and bring real enthusiasm to their teaching.
- The modern foreign languages department enjoys very strong, supportive leadership.
- The limited time allocated to French and German in Year 9 is holding back standards and students' achievement.

Commentary

Examination results

74. In 2003, GCSE results in French were significantly better than in 2002 when results were well above average. Results in German were slightly below average, although in 2002 they had been equal to those in French. Particularly strong were the results of girls in French. Nearly half of them gained a grade A* or A. Lower-attaining students, boys and girls, also achieved very well with almost all of them scoring at least grade E or above.

Standards and achievement

75. In Year 9 standards are above average in French. In German, standards are average because students only started in Year 8. Students are not able to reach higher standards because they have much less time for each language than is needed to cover enough ground. In French, for example, students currently have only one period each week. Time is wasted in lessons reminding students of what they learnt a week ago. Even so, many students of all levels of attainment speak with good accent and pronunciation in French and German. They understand the language spoken at speed and higher attainers write with accuracy and flair. Strong enthusiastic teaching in the foreign language partly compensates for the lack of time. Because of this, students are achieving satisfactorily. By Year 11, standards are well above average in French and above average in German. Students' written work in German is less well developed than in French where students do more pieces of continuous writing using a variety of tenses and idiomatic vocabulary. As in Year 9, students on the GCSE course have unusually good speaking and listening skills. In this respect lower-attaining students and those with learning needs are achieving as well as others. Boys, too, achieve well in these skills, although their writing is not as accurate or well developed as that of girls. At all stages students would benefit from more chances to read freely in the foreign language.

Teaching and learning

76. Teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory and as a result students learn well. In many lessons, particularly in Year 10, teaching is very good. A particular strength of the department is the excellent command teachers have of their subject, even when they are using their second foreign language. Students have to listen carefully and respond quickly. They have well developed pronunciation because they hear so much high quality language spoken. Colourful visuals and deft use of the interactive whiteboard; productive pair work; brisk starts to lessons; demanding homework – all these and more are successful in helping students learn. Much of the teaching appeals to boys. Written work is helpfully marked. In a few lessons teaching lacks rigour and the language is not used as consistently. Not all teachers require students to use the foreign language sufficiently for routine requests such as asking to borrow something.

Leadership and management

77. The modern foreign languages department is very well led and efficiently managed. Language teachers are a strong team of well-qualified professionals who work very well together. Another strength of the department is the rich menu of language events, visits and exchanges, which it offers beyond the curriculum. ICT is used well with students in Years 7, 8 and 9. Keen linguists in Year 10 are able to continue learning a second language after school. Students' progress is well tracked and they know what they must do to improve. However, more use could be made of National Curriculum levels to encourage younger students to aim higher. Teachers do not observe each other often enough ; as a result, the very best practice is not evenly spread. In spite of the disappointing German results in 2003, and the lack of time for both languages in Year 9, the department has moved on well since the previous inspection and is well placed to continue improving.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching, and standards are well above average and continue to improve
- Very good leadership and management now provide the subject with a clear vision and direction.
- There is very good provision for the highest attaining students.
- Homework is used very effectively to support students' learning.
- Assessment procedures are good and are used well to monitor students' progress.
- The numeracy strategy is not used well enough to develop students' learning.
- Methods of teaching are not varied enough; learning is often too directed by the teacher.

Commentary

Examination results

78. Results in the 2003 Year 9 national tests were well above average. They were very high in relation to students' attainment on entry to the school. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, results were well above average in comparison with all schools nationally and in relation to students' attainment at the end of Year 9. The proportion gaining grades A*/A was well above average. Year 10 GCSE statistics results were very high; almost all students gained grades A*/A.

Standards and achievement

79. In Year 9, students' mathematical skills are well above average. This represents good achievement as they enter the school with skills in mathematics that are above average. Most students recall their tables confidently when doing mental calculations but resort too quickly to using calculators for simple calculations. The highest attaining students use percentages confidently when dealing with increasing and decreasing quantities. Students' data handling skills are good; students understand how to identify different measures of average. The mathematical skills of students in Year 11 are well above average. They have developed good problem solving skills; they explain their ideas well using appropriate technical language and can identify patterns, find rules and formulae, predict and test results. Algebraic skills are satisfactory; the highest attaining students solve quadratic equations confidently but the lowest attaining students have difficulty with simplifying expressions and solving simple equations. Overall, students' achievement and progress are good.

Teaching and learning

80. The quality of teaching is good which results in good learning and achievement for students. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan activities, which usually challenge students well. The highest attaining students achieve very well because they are challenged by appropriate material. For example, the department organises a group of Year 10 students to take GCSE statistics one year early. Occasionally, however, tasks are not matched well enough to the needs of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs with the result that their progress is slower than might be expected. Teachers question students well about what they already know and good links are made with previous learning to develop new skills and concepts. Good use is made of ICT to support teaching. This ensures that the pace of lessons is good and teachers are able to develop students' understanding well. Teachers set high expectations for students' work and behaviour that ensures that students usually have good attitudes in lessons and behave well. Homework is used very well to ensure that students' learning is developed effectively. Day-to-day assessment in lessons is good and marking is very effective in informing students about what they should do to improve. However, in Years 7 to 9 National Curriculum levels are not used well enough to inform students of how well they are doing in relation to national standards. The national numeracy strategy is not clearly embedded in teachers' planning; lesson objectives do not provide a clear focus for lessons and the time at the end of lessons is not used effectively to review students' learning. In addition, insufficient use is made of starter activities to develop students' mental and oral skills and not enough attention is given to developing students' literacy skills.

Leadership and management

81. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision and direction provided for improvement. Very good use is made of assessment data and examination results to evaluate the performance of the subject. Teaching is very well monitored and is clearly targeted at improving approaches to teaching. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection. The provision and use of computers to support learning has improved significantly and sufficient attention is now given to developing students' ability to use and apply mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

82. Standards in students' numeracy skills are well above average. Skills are developed very well in mathematics lessons and students' competence is high. As a result students cope well with applying their skills in other subjects. For example, in science and geography, students tabulate and draw graphs effectively. In design and technology students' measuring skills are developed and used effectively when dealing with ideas of shape and space. The school does not have a whole school policy for numeracy and no arrangements are in place for monitoring and coordinating it across the curriculum. Few subjects are planning effectively to develop students' numeracy skills in lessons.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in all years achieve well and attain well above average standards by Year 11 as a result of very good teaching.
- Teachers consider the students' needs well and work is challenging for students at all levels.
- Good leadership ensures that there is a clear focus on improvement and an awareness of curriculum development needs.
- Monitoring of marking is not systematic enough and the use of assessment to set targets is not well enough developed.
- The students undertake practical work well, but they are not given enough opportunities to develop investigational skills or to use ICT in their work.

Commentary

Examination results

83. Results in the 2002 national tests for Year 9 pupils were well above average, as were the 2002 GCSE results. In 2003, national test results were well above average as were GCSE results, and re-established an upward trend. The results in the separate science GCSE examinations were above those in the dual award but this is to be expected, since the highest attaining students take the separate sciences.

Standards and achievement

84. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is above average in the work seen on the inspection and well above average in test results. At this stage in the school year, these students are on target to match recent test results. This represents good achievement, since they enter the school with above average levels of attainment. Achievement is also good in Years 10 and 11, with well above average standards maintained. Students in all years have a very good grasp of work they have previously covered and they show a good understanding of the facts and underlying principles involved in their work in biology, chemistry and physics. They undertake practical work well, follow instructions carefully and show good regard for safety. However, standards in experimental and investigative science are not as high because the students have fewer opportunities to practise the skills involved. Students communicate well and explain their work effectively. They also have good mathematical skills to support their learning in science. ICT skills are less well developed because suitable equipment (for example for data-logging) is not readily available, but new facilities are planned for next year.

Teaching and learning

85. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is better because it is more consistent. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan work that matches the needs of the students well, providing a good level of challenge for all students. Real-life applications of science are emphasised so that students can see the relevance of work they are doing. This motivates them very well and ensures that they are interested and well behaved. An excellent lesson was seen in which low attaining Year 8 students were comparing the functions of the eye and a camera. This lesson was extremely well planned and managed well, with a wide variety of interesting activities that kept the students fully engaged in their work throughout the lesson. The learning support assistant played an effective part in ensuring that all the class could understand and cope with the work. As a result the students made very good progress in their learning and reached standards that were well above what would be expected for this group. In most lessons there is a very good variety of teaching methods that are appropriate to the topic being taught and the teachers use demonstrations well to illustrate key ideas. This includes good use of computers to record and present results. Some of the teachers make learning objectives very clear to the students but this is inconsistent and is an area of teaching that could be improved. Teachers assess the students' work regularly but standards of marking vary across the department and there is not enough use of assessment to set targets for learning.

Leadership and management

86. The department is well managed and the acting head of science has provided good leadership in drawing up development plans that focus on further improvement. A clear vision is communicated and consequently teamwork is good. There is a good awareness of the need for curriculum development and a good start has been made in using ideas and methods from the national strategy to raise standards in Years 7 to 9. The quality of teaching and learning are effectively monitored although there is a need to extend this to include monitoring of marking of students' work. The science technicians very effectively support the teachers although the time allocated for this support is below what would be expected in a school of this size, particularly in the afternoons when there is only one technician on duty. Progress since the last inspection has been good, with standards maintained and improvements to the management and organisation of courses. Chemistry still remains the weaker subject, although this is improving.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Aspect	Year 9	Year 10*
Standards	Above Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

*No Year 11 lessons were seen during the inspection, and there are currently no Year 11 examination courses in ICT

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students from Years 7 to 9 achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Students' good attitudes help them to learn well.
- Good leadership and management provide clear vision, direction and organisation with a focus on improving standards.
- The coordination of ICT across the school has yet to be clarified to ensure that students' access to ICT is well managed.

Commentary.

Examination results

87. No examinations were taken in ICT in 2003.

Standards and achievement

88. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is above average. This represents good achievement as they enter the school with varied experience of using ICT, although average overall. Also these students had limited formal teaching of ICT in Years 7 and 8. Most students are developing a sense of audience when designing newsletters and posters. They understand how to format a page using desktop publishing applications. Teachers emphasise accurate use of English, so students draft and redraft their work to make it more fit for purpose. Teachers encourage students to seek their own solutions by using ICT and, as a result they use the Internet well for research. Higher attaining students quickly learn the purposes and functions of databases. They successfully design a database structure to sort and categorise house types for prospective buyers. Year 11 students do not follow examination courses. However most have average ICT skills that are used effectively in other subjects. Students in Year 10 follow a GCSE course and are working at average levels and are achieving well. These students, and their peers in Year 11 received unsatisfactory provision in their earlier years in school. The senior leadership team identified the problem and have put in place successful measures to tackle the problem. It has meant, however, that current Year 11 students did not opt for GCSE courses in ICT and current Year 10 students started their course from a below average level of attainment. The good use of ICT by other subjects has ensured that students in Year 11 have attained average standards.

Teaching and learning

89. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic and know their subject very well. As a result students are motivated and want to learn. These very positive attitudes, especially in Years 7 to 9, help students to make good progress. Tasks are challenging and lessons move on at a good pace so that all students are constantly made to think. Lessons are well planned, often in specific short sections that maintain students' interest. Teachers and students use interactive white boards very well for demonstrations and discussion. Teachers are constantly on the move, checking and supporting students so that they make good progress. Students with special educational needs achieve well because of the good support from teachers and learning support assistants. Teachers also use appropriate written materials with these students, and those of lower prior attainment, to help them understand the tasks. Good extension work is also provided for higher attaining students. The marking of students' work is good and gives clear pointers for improvement. Certain topics are assessed and recorded against national expectations in Years 7 to 9. However the information is not yet developed enough for students to compare their performance against these standards and to know what they must do to improve. Homework is used well as an integral part of teaching; therefore lessons make very good use of the time available. However some students in Year 10 do not always complete their homework. This limits their progress and wastes the time of the rest of the class. Teachers' insist on good behaviour so learning proceeds without interruption. Many

students use the resources independently outside lesson time to further develop their ICT skills.

Leadership and management

90. The department is led and managed well. There is a clear sense of direction with the main focus being on improving standards, a vision that is shared by all members of the ICT team. This follows a period when ICT provision was unsatisfactory and students did not gain the standards they should. The new head of department, with good support from the senior leadership team, has tackled the problem and provision is now good and improving, but there is a legacy of underachievement still being tackled. In a short time new courses have been introduced that have improved attainment and achievement. Teaching is well monitored and supported. The greatly improved resources are well maintained by a skilled technical team. However reports to parents do not adequately tell them what students know, understand and can do, and how to improve still further. Monitoring of student performance across the whole department has yet to be developed. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in terms of resources, staffing and a curriculum that enables students to develop their skills and capability as they move through the school in a structured manner.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. There is good use of ICT across the curriculum. Under a new head of department, the management of how ICT is to be coordinated and developed further across the school has yet to be clarified. No up-to-date audit of the contribution of each subject to the development of students' ICT skills and capability has been made. Despite this, most subjects use ICT as an integral part of their teaching. A particular strength is the good use of interactive white boards to demonstrate and to involve students actively in lessons. The school's status as a mathematics and computing college, and a commitment from senior management and governors have greatly improved ICT resources. The introduction of specific ICT courses, that all students will follow, enables students to further develop their skills and to apply them in other subjects. Most subjects use ICT well to develop students' ability to communicate information. In English, for example, students create websites that integrate data well from a variety of sources. The Internet is used for research in many subjects, as is word processing software especially for course work in Years 10 and 11. Students use ICT in mathematics to explore data handling. Music software is used well for composing. ICT is used effectively in design and technology to model circuits. Students use the computers to successfully search for careers information. However some subjects find it difficult to gain access to the computers, and as a result are unable to use ICT to enhance teaching and learning. The new buildings when complete will provide more ICT facilities.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average because students respond well to the good teaching they receive.
- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and maintain this through Years 10 and 11.
- Very good assessments test the application of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Temporary changes in accommodation have had an adverse impact on the efficiency of management.

Commentary

Examination results

92. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were well above average and have been sustained over time. Standards in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are above average. Girls and boys do equally well and consistently do better than their peers nationally

Standards and achievement

93. By Year 9, most students acquire good knowledge and a good depth of understanding of physical processes and their impact on human activities. Most students can locate places and use maps and other resources competently. Geographical vocabulary and skills including literacy, numeracy and ICT knowledge are applied well to assessments. Older students build on their prior learning effectively. They think well and their work indicates a good understanding of the problems involved in dealing with issues such as coastal management and sustainable development. They ask questions and seek answers through fieldwork and other resources including ICT based research. Students in year 11 bring together all aspects of their learning to produce good quality coursework and are well placed at this time to reach high standards at GCSE.

Teaching and learning

94. Teachers' high expectations and students' often-exemplary behaviour contribute to a purposeful learning environment. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and is used effectively in well-planned lessons where challenging activities, together with skilled and probing questioning consolidate and progressively extend learning, and a brisk pace keeps everyone occupied. Very good assessments effectively tests progress over time, but the links between grades and National Curriculum levels is not made clear to students. Homework

extends learning but marking and the use of constructive comments on how to improve are inconsistent. Lessons are considerably enhanced by the use of interactive whiteboards and “PowerPoint” but too few teachers use them.

Leadership and management

95. Experienced and highly professional leadership has sustained high standards over time, made the subject a popular choice at GCSE and facilitated good improvement since the last inspection. Temporary reorganisation of school accommodation has resulted in the department being split up and relocated at opposite ends of the school, which is having a negative impact on the efficiency of management. Resources are scattered and the overview of what is happening within the department made difficult by problems of communication. As a result, individual good practice in the classroom including the use ICT as a tool for teaching is not being shared enough. Time is being lost with students and teachers moving to opposite ends of the school. Insufficient use is made of proficiency in ICT to provide a central database of student progress.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students from Years 7 to 11 attain well above average standards and achieve very well across the years as a result of very good teaching.
- Students find history enjoyable and stimulating and as a result they are very well motivated to succeed, and history is a popular subject.
- The curriculum is very good quality; very well planned for progress through gradually increasing challenge, and enlivened by a strong programme of fieldwork.
- There is not enough systematic use of ICT in lessons as current accommodation is unsuitable, access to facilities is limited, and this limits the development of research skills.

Commentary

Examination results

96. The 2002 GCSE examination results were well above the national average and all students gained a grade. The results were among the best in the school. The percentage gaining grades A* and A was high, indicating that higher attaining students do very well in history. Boys did better than girls; their results were very high in comparison to national figures. In 2003 the results were also high, but this time girls did better than the boys. Results in history have been consistently high since 1998.

Standards and achievement

97. By the end of Year 9, students' standards are well above average, as teachers' assessments indicate. This represents very good achievement as they enter the school with skills in history that are just above average. Students of all abilities make very good progress, as do the few students seen from a minority ethnic background. In Year 9, most students can understand a range of complex causes for the American defeat in the Vietnam War, and discuss which one was most significant, with a good command of relevant and accurate detail. Literacy skills are high, so students write fluently, and both boys and girls also speak well and confidently.
98. Students are prepared very well to begin GCSE work in the earlier years, and by Year 11 achievement continues to be very good for both boys and girls, and all abilities. No Year 11 lessons could be seen, so judgements are based on the evidence of students' work, their examination coursework, and by discussions with students. These students were confident that they were doing well and could discuss their history with competence. The boys made it clear how much they enjoyed the opportunities to argue, and said that the cut and thrust of debate was one of the main reasons why boys enjoyed history and did very well. In a lesson seen, higher attaining Year 10 students were preparing written work on the decline of the League of Nations. They were drawing on a wide range of issues and events, and they deployed these to very good effect in structuring their draft. They are achieving very well.

Teaching and learning

99. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is very good. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory and most was very good. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to plan lively lessons that engage students' interest very well. Lessons have a clear focus on specific skills as well as acquiring knowledge that makes them very effective. Students of all abilities are challenged very well. There is an emphasis on problem solving through over-arching enquiry questions as a context for each lesson such as "How glorious was the revolution of 1688?" This is very successful in pushing students to analyse, evaluate and reach considered judgements. There are many opportunities for students to use their initiative and to discuss history. Inadequate access to ICT facilities and the unsuitable temporary classrooms put some constraints on teaching. There are not enough opportunities to use ICT in lessons to develop research skills through this medium. However, there are well-formulated plans to redress this soon. Marking and assessment are thorough and helpful so that students know where they are and how to improve. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They show high levels of interest, are very ready to answer questions, work together productively and take a pride in their work. These positive responses to lessons promote very good learning. History remains a popular subject in Years 10 and 11 because students enjoy their experience of history in the early years and benefit from the enthusiasm of the teachers.

Leadership and management

100. The department is very well led and managed. Despite some turbulence in staffing and leadership, the acting leader has maintained high standards and the momentum for continued improvement in the department with great expertise and vision. Performance is thoroughly evaluated and acted upon. Since the last inspection the schemes of work have been carefully revised so that there is now a very well conceived model for progress in students' development and much better provision for meeting the varied needs of students of all abilities. The greater attention to literacy and to boys' achievement is very effective. The programme for fieldwork has been extended so that there is a major visit in each year and these visits have a significant impact on students' understanding and enjoyment of history. The unsuitable rooms are enlivened very well with displays so that students enjoy a stimulating environment as far as possible.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11 GCSE examination course*
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

*It was not possible to see students who follow the non-examination course during the inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the latest GCSE results, all ten candidates gained grades in the range A* to C, reflecting very good achievement in relation to their starting points.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good in all years and this helps them to benefit from the teaching.
- Teaching is very good overall in Years 7 to 9 leading to very good achievement.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' personal development.
- There is not enough systematic use of ICT in lessons and this limits the development of research skills.

Commentary

Examination results

101. Results in 2002 GCSE were well above average as all ten candidates gained grades from A* to C. This was good achievement for those students. There were no GCSE candidates in 2003 but numbers are increasing again and currently there are viable examination groups in Years 10 and 11.

Standards and achievement

102. By the end of Year 9, students attain standards that are above average. Most students enjoy the subject and both boys and girls of all abilities achieve very well in relation to their starting point in Year 7. They rise to intellectual challenge very well. This was seen in work on the 'ultimate questions' of the meaning of life, and in their lessons on Buddhism. Students in upper set groups can discuss the meaning of such concepts as karma, dukkha, and enlightenment with understanding. In a lower set group in Year 9, students knew these terms securely. Students express their knowledge and understanding of the major world religions well in writing. Their literacy skills are high, and higher attaining students write fluently and in varied styles.

103. In the current classes, standards are above average in Years 10 and 11 and students of all abilities are achieving well, both boys and girls are on line to reach the well above average results of the last examination group. It was not possible to see a Year 11 lesson, but evidence was gathered from students' work and by holding a discussion with some of the students. They were able to talk confidently about Christian concepts of the nature of God, and how

much they had learnt from a recent visit to a Hindu Temple in Neasden. In a Year 10 lesson, students showed good levels of knowledge and understanding, and could explain the difference between fundamentalist views of the Bible and those who believe it is open to interpretation. No evidence was seen for students' standards in the non-examined religious education course for students of this age, as the relevant aspects of their integrated course with citizenship are due to be taught next term.

Teaching and learning

104. Teaching and learning are good overall. All teaching seen was satisfactory and better, and the quality is very good overall in the first three years. In the best lessons, there is pace and drive, and varied activities that challenge, engage and encourage students very well. Students enjoy and learn very effectively from the opportunities to discuss and ask questions, and to relate the topics to their own life experiences. This was seen in several Year 9 lessons on Buddhism, and is helpful to their own personal development. They also learn well when resources are stimulating and artefacts used, as they were in Year 10. Where lessons are relatively weaker, the pace was not so marked, and the resources duller. Non-specialists do some teaching and their expertise is not as strong as seen in other lessons. There is good attention to literacy skills. There is not enough systematic use of ICT to develop research skills in this subject. This is largely due to unsuitable accommodation and limited access to facilities.

Leadership and management

105. Leadership is good. Standards are monitored effectively and staff morale maintained in a period of rapid staff changes, and where temporary accommodation is so unsuitable that water spoils teachers' displays whenever there is heavy rain. Management is satisfactory, but has been diverted from its focus by a burden of other demands, chiefly concerned with provision for citizenship and social education. There are important developments in hand well focused on raising standards. The links established with some primary schools are helping to ensure continuity for Year 7 students, and there is a good quality curricular pathway for students to progress through examination courses to the sixth form and on to related degree courses. However, the low time allocation for the non-examined course of compulsory religious education for all students in Years 10 and 11 reported at the last inspection still continues, and time is barely adequate to cover statutory requirements. Nevertheless a worthwhile joint course of religious education and citizenship has been established for Years 10 and 11. It is not accredited, but students enjoy it, and it is very beneficial for their personal development with strong spiritual and moral elements. The curriculum is enriched well by opportunities for visits out of school. It is further enriched by the extra-curricular opportunities for community service, and by the pastoral care offered by the department who have an 'open door' policy throughout the teaching day. This does have a significant impact on students' attitudes and so is helpful to their learning. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good attitudes to the subject, which contributes to their very good achievement.
- The good teaching capitalises well on students' positive approaches and leads to their making very good progress in relation to their starting points.
- The acting head of department has made a good start in leading and managing the department.
- The curriculum is broad, with well-chosen projects that challenge students and engage their interest, so stimulating very good achievement.
- Assessment practice does not make enough use of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and target setting in Years 7 to 11.
- ICT provision, including computer-aided design and manufacturing facilities, is lacking in the food and textile technology rooms.
- There is currently insufficient workshop accommodation to meet the curriculum demand in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

Examination results

106. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show that students attain levels that are above average in comparison to the national average. In 2002, students gained results in their GCSE examinations that were well above average. Overall, the results were slightly lower in 2003.

Standards and achievement

107. In the work seen in Year 9, a similar level of attainment to recent teacher assessments is evident, and students achieve very well from a below average starting point. The achievements of the girls are at slightly higher levels than those of the boys. Making and constructional skills are more highly developed than design and graphical skills for many students. In general, the girls' design skills are better developed than the boys'. Higher attaining students have a more secure grasp of subject knowledge and vocabulary. The teachers use challenging projects and tasks in a variety of materials that make increasing demands on students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. As a consequence all students make very good progress. Numeracy and literacy skills are stressed and developed in designing and making activities. The use of ICT is not consistent across the department due to lack of

facilities in the food and textiles rooms, but it is used well in resistant materials, electronics and graphics to support and extend the learning.

108. The Year 11 work seen during the inspection confirmed that the well above average standards achieved in recent examinations are being maintained. The standards achieved by the girls continue to be higher than the boys on most GCSE courses. In the food, graphics and textiles courses, standards are higher than in electronics and resistant materials. The girls' design and graphical skills continue to be better developed than those of the boys, especially the boys at the middle to lower levels of attainment. The girls' work usually has a greater depth of research and more rigorous analysis when developing their designs. The strength of the boys' work continues to be their practical making skills. Very good behaviour, concentration and positive attitudes to the subject of all students add to the effect of the consistently good and better teaching, and ensure that achievement is very good in all years.

Teaching and learning

109. Teaching and learning are good in all years and were very good in a number of lessons observed. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a variety of stimulating projects that strongly engage the interest of their students. This leads to very good achievement as the students are challenged by the tasks presented to them. The teachers use a range of appropriate methods to engage the students with the learning, and questioning, explanations and demonstrations are particularly effective in developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers provide learning resources of good quality, and homework is used effectively to consolidate, extend and prepare for future work. In all lessons the teachers give high levels of individual support and well-informed feedback, which encourages the students to value their efforts and raises their level of motivation. There was a loss of pace in the learning in some lessons where teachers did not set time deadlines for the completion of intermediate tasks. Also, the teachers have clear objectives for their lessons but do not always share these with the students or review the progress made at the end.

Leadership and management

110. The department is well led and managed and the recently appointed, acting head of department, has identified clear development priorities. A new scheme of work has been introduced and the development plan is well focused on raising attainment. The staff are very well qualified and deployed to their specialist strengths. The accommodation is well maintained and provides attractive working environments for the students. There is currently insufficient workshop space to meet the demands of the curriculum, particularly in Years 7 to 9, but plans are in place to rectify this deficiency in the near future. The assessment system does not make enough use of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and targets for improvement in all years. Resources are good, overall, but the provision of ICT facilities in the food and textiles rooms is inadequate. In particular more equipment is needed for computer aided design and manufacture in textiles. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are consistently well above national averages for grades A* to C.
- Teaching overall is good, with strengths in preparation, relationships and methods, securing good learning.
- Assessment is good and ensures students achieve their potential.
- The department has made very good progress since the last inspection, thus raising standards.
- Students' attitudes towards the subject are very good and they behave very well in lessons.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory as there are too few rooms in the department and inadequate storage facilities.
- The department has only one computer, which limits ICT access in lessons in art rooms.

Commentary

Examination results

111. Results of the teachers' assessments in 2003 showed that students were working to a standard that was above average. Work seen during the inspection matches the teachers' assessments. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were well above average. In 2003, results were slightly lower, reflecting the attainment level of the different group. Fewer boys opted to take GCSE and their results overall were slightly lower than those of the girls.

Standards and achievement

112. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement by this group of students in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Drawing skills are good. In painting they know how to mix colours to get the shades they need and apply different paints in appropriate ways. Clay work is very good. Students' knowledge of real artists is good as they not only examine the work of, for example, David Hockney and the African artists and craftspeople, but they emulate and write about their styles and research the subject thoroughly, often using the Internet for homework.
113. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11. This demonstrates very good achievement, as the GCSE course is very demanding of students' time and personal response. Students' portfolios contain many samples and examples, showing inventiveness and ingenuity. They produce work in two and three-dimensions. Use of ICT is best from the highest attaining students and many boys, but is largely conducted out of lesson time, as there

is only one computer in the department. Most students use their sketchbooks appropriately to record what they are doing, appraise and criticise art and artists and complete homework. The small size of the Year 11 sketchbooks is marring presentation and scope in many instances.

Teaching and learning.

114. The quality of teaching overall is good and secures good quality learning. Added to this, the teachers are adept at capitalising on the students' positive approach to study and this results in very good achievement. The teachers are very well skilled and enthusiastic about their subject, which in turn motivates the students. Relationships are strong. Teachers treat students fairly and ensure they have equal dialogue with them to inform them of the quality of their class work and homework and how they can improve. Teachers are very patient in helping individual students with problems, from which the lower-attaining students benefit most as they gain in confidence. Teachers plan and prepare very thoroughly for lessons. These aspects bring out very high attainment because students see the teachers using well-chosen resources in skilful demonstrations and they hear accurate information. Students are encouraged to use correct terminology, be aware of community projects and computer-aided art and appreciate art from other countries and cultures. Teachers value students' work and display it prominently in the art rooms and around the school. This raises self-esteem; it allows students to see what others can do and sets high standards.

Leadership and management

115. Leadership is very good. Colleagues and students see the head of department as a strong leader who is very well respected. The department plan includes clear targets for individuals, improvement, innovations and where resources are needed in order to extend the curriculum. Management is good. The department keeps records of students' success but as yet does not analyse fully the results to compare attainment and achievement of different groups of students. Monitoring of teaching is good, but should be put on a more formal base. There are too few art rooms, accommodation is cramped and is having a detrimental effect on aesthetics and three-dimensional practical work. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is higher, standards are rising, there are new schemes of work that capitalise on the particular skills of the new teachers and include stronger links with ICT, more boys now opt to take art and the programme of visits to galleries and museums has been extended.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning are resulting in good achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11.
- There are well above average results in GCSE examinations, which reflect students' good progress in relation to their starting points.
- The development of computer technology is enriching the curriculum in all years.
- Assessment procedures do not adequately refer to National Curriculum levels.
- Accommodation and some specific resources are still unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient documentation available to describe the music department's policies.

Commentary

Examination results

116. Results in GCSE examinations in recent years, including 2002, have been consistently well above average. In 2003, all but one of the eighteen candidates, including eight boys, gained A* to C grades, reflecting their good progress in relation to their starting points.

Standards and achievement

117. Students enter the school with overall average standards. They make good progress through Years 7 to 9 and achieve above average standards by the end of Year 9. The students' good attitudes, and good teaching and learning, contribute to the good achievement made. Year 7 students have average practical skills, and have a secure knowledge about instruments of the orchestra. Many have well-developed aural skills. Year 9 students are successfully writing lyrics for a song, setting the words to music, with the more able adding accompaniments to the melody. This good progress is maintained through Years 10 and 11. The quality of composition by Year 10 and 11 students is good. Most Year 10 students have very good aural perception, and many of the guitarists, particularly, are accomplished performers. They are currently using these skills to improve their performances, based on blues, reggae and show songs. No Year 11 lessons could be observed, but discussion with Year 11 students, and a scrutiny of their work, showed that most have above average standards of performance, and are producing quality compositions.

Teaching and learning

118. Teaching and learning are good overall. There are some very good features. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and the teaching of composition is particularly strong. Lessons are mostly well balanced, with an appropriate link between listening and appraising in the first half, and associated practical work in the second half. Occasionally, when lessons are entirely practical, insufficient time is allowed for a plenary sharing of what students have achieved. Practical work is always open-ended, enabling students of all ability to progress appropriately. Assessment procedures are thorough, but do not adequately refer to National Curriculum levels, and do not enable students and teachers together to set individual targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

119. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has high expectations of what students should achieve by the end of Years 9 and 11, and enables them to be successful. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection, though there are still too few keyboards. Accommodation problems, though improved, create management difficulties in terms of monitoring and liaising with visiting instrumental teachers. There are limited spaces for group work, particularly when both music rooms are being used simultaneously. Good progress has been made in the development of computer technology, which is enriching the curriculum in all years. Departmental policies do not include strategies

for contributing to the wider education of students, for example in developing literacy and numeracy skills, or providing for gifted and talented students.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 10 * (Core course)	Year 11 * (Examination course)
Standards	Above average	Above average (Core)	Above average (GCSE*)
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

*It was not possible to see students who follow the non-examination course in the inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good or better and ensures good learning.
- The very good attitudes of students ensure their good achievement.
- Assessment recording and reporting procedures lack the necessary detail to establish and to further improve students' achievement.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation severely constrains the range of activities that students are taught.

Commentary

Examination results

120. The school has only recently introduced an examination course in physical education. In 2003, examination results were above the average recorded in recent years. Students who took the examination did better in physical education than they did in the other subjects they took.

Standards and achievements

121. Standards are above average in both Years 9 and 10. During the inspection, Year 11 students were unavailable, but discussions were held with a selected group, and a great deal of the work of the current GCSE groups was scrutinised. In all years, students are making good progress and are achieving well. Year 9 boys show good close ball control in soccer, and can shield the ball effectively from opponents. Most of them can successfully transfer skills learned in lessons into a full game situation. In gymnastics, many Year 8 girls can perform headstands safely and with growing confidence, and some can perform handstands competently. They know how to support each other in developing these inverted balances, and can link them with some fluency into a sequence of balances. In the Year 10 non-examination group, students were able play a game of basketball at pace and with skill, and were able to analyse some of the complex skills involved and suggest ways in which the skill could be improved, using appropriate criteria in their analyses.

Teaching and learning

122. Teaching is consistently good, with much that is very good. This ensures that good learning takes place, and thus leads to good levels of achievement for all groups of students. The best teaching is typified by its high pace, which places challenging demands on students to learn quickly, and by its clear expectation that students will work well and thus achieve well. Class management is always very good, and this ensures that students spend the maximum amount of time engaged in learning activities. Relationships between students and teachers are very good, and the students respond well to trust placed in them to work well. Students of all ages are very well behaved and have very good attitudes to learning. These are strong contributing factors to their overall good achievement. They are unfailingly tolerant of the different views and abilities of their peers, and they work well when not under direct supervision. Teachers give students many opportunities to plan and evaluate their own work and the work of others. In the examination groups, quite detailed and demanding homework is set consistently, and is marked well. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs make equally good progress.

Leadership and management

123. The leadership and management of the department are both good. There is a clear focus on raising standards and equality of opportunity for all students. The teaching team is a well-balanced blend of youth and experience. They struggle successfully to overcome the significant constraints placed on the curriculum by the unsuitable accommodation. There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities that involves most of the students in the school in competitive activity at a range of levels. A focus on the monitoring of the quality of learning, and hence of students' progress, needs to use Nationally Curriculum levels more overtly in all years. The department does not set individual targets for its students. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Students are given the opportunity to think for themselves and there is good accreditation through GCSE of the work done by some students in Years 10 and 11.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

The teaching of citizenship could not be seen during the inspection, but provision was sampled through extensive scrutiny of work and focused interviews with students. Citizenship, PSHE and careers are well integrated. Citizenship has been successfully introduced through a weekly form period in Years 7 to 11, and through an additional weekly period of social education in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Citizenship has been introduced and developed very successfully.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Excellent links have been made with the community.
- Religious education and history make good contributions to students' understanding of citizenship.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

124. It was not possible to observe lessons in citizenship, as it was not timetabled during the period of the inspection. Other evidence shows students have above average standards. They have a good grasp of citizenship matters, and achieve well across Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, students understand the key functions and public services in the United Kingdom parliament. They make good gains in their awareness of the political, economic, environmental and social implications of being part of a global community. By the end of Year 11, they have a deeper knowledge of parliament, focusing upon the criminal and justice systems. They can also successfully analyse their own individual roles in society. Students' overall good attitudes contribute to good achievement. A young soldier who had been blinded in the Bosnia conflict gave a talk to over 200 Year 10 students during the inspection. The students were totally silent and engrossed throughout. Their attitudes and behaviour, together with the excellent presentation, led them to learning much about the functions and workings of charitable foundations.
125. A scrutiny of work, and extensive discussions with students, revealed learning to be good across Years 7 to 11. Lessons are reported by students to be challenging and informative. Difficult, and often sensitive, matters are dealt with very clearly. Students' views are sought and debated. Work is marked consistently and advice is given about areas for improvement. Assessment procedures are thorough.

Leadership and management

126. Leadership and management are very good. A member of the school's senior leadership team is the citizenship co-ordinator, and has done a very good job to bring the subject on stream. There has been an audit of existing practice, and any gaps in provision have been identified and tackled. Allocated resources have been judiciously spent. Citizenship is taught to all students from Years 7 to 11 in a form period, with Year 10 and 11 students receiving an additional lesson a week in social education. In addition, aspects are included in history and religious education, and plans are in hand to include them in geography, science and English. Excellent links with the community are being developed. Students are heavily involved in a wide range of activities in the local community. Quality displays detailing many aspects of citizenship are to be found on corridor walls around the school, demonstrating the school's commitment to the subject. Overall, the successful focus upon citizenship is leading to students across the school having a responsible attitude towards their role in society.

OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

Aspect	Year 11
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of courses available provides students with an excellent choice.
- Achievement is very good because of very good teaching.
- Leadership and management are very good with a very well planned curriculum in place including two new courses.
- Assessment of some classwork and homework does not give students sufficient guidance on how to improve.
- Some teaching methods do not place sufficient emphasis on using and applying newly learned subject-specific terminology.

Commentary

Examination results

GCSE results in 2002 were well above average. 2003 results were similar showing very good achievement, with no differences between boys' and girls' results..

Standards and achievement

127. Achievement on all three courses organised under the auspices of business studies is very good. In business studies, Year 10 students conduct surveys into local businesses. They display a very good grasp of research methods at an early stage in the course. ICT skills in presenting their findings are very good. By the end of Year 11, students achieve very high standards in their coursework through investigating potential business ventures. Their research into gaps in the market is extremely thorough including an analysis of potential competition. They use and apply theoretical concepts very well in their work and display a very good grasp of key terminology. Skills in evaluating research findings are weaker amongst lower attainers as is the depth achieved in investigations. In the recently introduced applied business course, Year 10 students display a very good understanding of how businesses are organised and the contributions made by the different sections of a particular company. Again they are able to apply theory very well to case studies. In another recently introduced course (business and communications systems) students make very good gains in acquiring ICT skills and applying them to real life business problems that require ICT solutions.

Teaching and learning

128. Teaching is very good overall and there is some excellent teaching. Methods constantly incorporate references to real world examples and this motivates students very well in their own learning. Active learning is encouraged and at an early stage in the business studies course students are required to research features of the local business community. Similarly the teaching of the two new courses emphasises the realities of the business world and its challenges. This emphasis again is a very strong motivating factor in students' learning. Lessons incorporate a variety of activities aimed at making learning enjoyable. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are incorporated very well into methods used and homework is very well integrated into lesson planning. Lessons necessarily have a challenging pace to meet syllabus requirements. The level of challenge was variable in some lessons seen, with greater challenge in whole class discussion than in small group activities. Discussions with Year 11 business studies students about their own learning indicate the need for a greater emphasis on using and applying newly acquired subject-specific terminology at an earlier stage in the course. Assessment methods are very thorough other than ensuring that students are guided precisely on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

129. The range of courses established offers students an excellent curriculum. The distinctive aspects of three quite different courses have been very well addressed in planning. Priorities for the development of each course have been identified very well. Links with local businesses are very well established and this in turn is a strong motivating factor. There is a very strong emphasis on self-evaluation with achievement targets set for each of the three courses and for individual courses. Improvement from the last inspection is very good.

Health and social care

In one Year 10 lesson seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory in a study of promoting health and well-being. Students' achievement was satisfactory in a lesson where they investigated the meaning of key terms, but methods were not always effective in consolidating the understanding of lower attainers. This was mainly because questions did not check students' learning thoroughly. Resources were used well with a video clip on smoking engaging students' interest well, but opportunities for students to discuss the issues raised were too limited. Overall students achieved well, subject knowledge was good and engaged students' interest well but opportunities for students to participate in discussion were limited.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 12 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002 comparisons are available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
MATHEMATICS	31	69.0	74.2	25.0	34.3	25.8	31.3
BIOLOGY	21	95.5	81.6	55	33.2	44.3	33.2
CHEMISTRY	16	88.0	84.8	42.0	36.9	34.4	35.2
PHYSICS	23	75	82.0	46.0	36.2	34.3	34.3
OTHER SCIENCES (GEOLOGY)	10	100	83.4	50.0	32.3	45.0	33.4
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY	21	86.0	89.2	18.5	32.0	31.0	35.7
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	15	47.0	78.2	6.0	20.6	16.7	28.5
BUSINESS STUDIES	23	100	89.1	54.0	31.7	46.5	35.4
GEOGRAPHY	41	98	88.3	62.0	36.4	46.6	36.3
HISTORY	30	97.0	91.8	60.0	37.2	46.0	37.8
SOCIOLOGY	20	95.0	83.7	50.0	33.6	41.5	33.8
ENGLISH LITERATURE	10	100	94.4	60.0	37.9	48.0	38.9
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	27	100	92.0	48.4	29.9	43.3	35.7
ART	13	85.0	90.0	23.0	42.7	33.0	38.9
FRENCH	17	95.0	85.4	50.0	35.2	42.2	34.9
GERMAN	12	100	67.6	25.0	22.9	41.7	N/A
THEATRE STUDIES	13	100	N/A	69.0	N/A	49.2	N/A
GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS	19	100	N/A	87.0	N/A	55.0	N/A
MUSIC	5	100	80.0	40.0	27.3	44.0	N/A
RELIGIOUS STUDIES	6	83.0	N/A	17.0	N/A	26.7	N/A
GENERAL STUDIES	116	90	78.6	48.0	25.7	40.2	30.0

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
MATHEMATICS	18	100	93.3	56.0	52.2	93.3	84.7
CHEMISTRY	11	100	94	36.0	45.9	81.8	81.1
BIOLOGY	25	100	91.6	64.0	36.3	97.6	74.1
PHYSICS	16	94.0	92.8	56.0	42.8	86.2	78.6
OTHER SCIENCES (Geology)	8	100	94.7	38.0	40.1	87.5	78.7
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY	13	92.0	95.3	31.0	35.5	76.9	76.5
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	10	70	89.1	0.00	22.4	42.0	64.1
BUSINESS STUDIES	17	94	96.4	35.0	32.8	78.9	76.5
ART AND DESIGN	6	100	96.1	17.0	48.7	80.0	85.1
GEOGRAPHY	30	100	97.1	67.0	40.5	99.3	80.9

HISTORY	16	100	97.1	62.5	41.0	100	81.2
SOCIOLOGY	23	100	95.4	56.5	39.6	91.3	79.1
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	12	100	98.3	75.0	36.5	95.7	80.1
ENGLISH LITERATURE	11	100	98.5	45.5	43.7	90.9	84.3
FRENCH	8	100	96.2	75.0	46.1	95.0	83.0
GERMAN	8	100	96.3	50.0	44.3	80.0	82.1
THEATRE STUDIES	3	100	N/A	67	N/A	93.3	N/A
GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS	18	100	N/A	89	N/A	110	N/A
MUSIC	4	100	98.0	75	42.0	100	82.1
GENERAL STUDIES	88	89.0	90.1	36.0	29.1	71.8	69.3

VCE RESULTS BY SUBJECT 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	8	100	87.1	62.5	16.5	90.0	60.1
Health and Social Care	11	100	90.1	18.2	16.3	72.7	62.5
Travel and Tourism	5	100	88.1	40.0	15.7	80.0	61.4
Leisure and Recreation	6	50	86.9	0.0	12.7	36.7	58.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was English language and French. English literature was also sampled. Here, a very good lesson saw Year 12 students make good progress in analysing the impacts of the characters in "Hard Times". Teaching was challenging, with excellent knowledge of the text an outstanding feature. Three lessons were seen in German. Students are achieving very well in German in response to the very good teaching they receive. Standards are well above average.

English

Provision in English language is **very good**.

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good teaching with particular strengths in the teachers' specialist knowledge that ensures very good learning.
- Students have very positive attitudes, motivated by their teachers' passion and enthusiasm for the subject.
- The subject is very well led and managed with very good teamwork.
- Some students do not have an effective enough understanding of the conventions of essay writing at post 16 level.

Commentary

Examination result

130. Results in the AS and A-level examinations in 2002 were well above average both for grades A-B and average points score. This represented very good achievement by this group of students. The results in 2003 fell slightly but not significantly so in both A2 and A-level. The course is popular and the completion rates are very high.

Standards and achievement

131. Standards in Year 13 are well above average and achievement is very good. Most students are on target to gain grade A-C. The work of higher attainers is characterized by strengths in their evaluative writing; detailed analysis; frequent, accurate application of the subjects' terminology; and high standards of grammatical accuracy. Students whose work does not reach these standards tend to be too descriptive in their writing and do not include enough detail when analysing texts. Some make too many grammatical errors. Even so, students are making very good progress in the independent application of the linguistic frameworks and concepts they have encountered. This was clearly demonstrated when they worked on their current projects. Their approach was characterized by a clear sightedness about what they needed to do and the secure application of effective research techniques such as the logging of semantic and syntactic features. They made very good use of ICT to record and model graphically their

findings. Year 12 students have made very good progress in acquiring and applying the essential lexis of the subject which they displayed confidently during a lesson on language and gender.

Teaching and learning

132. The quality of teaching is very good and secures very good learning. Outstanding strengths are the teachers' excellent subject knowledge backed up by their clear passion for their subject. Marking is very informative about strengths and weaknesses. Consequently students are not only well informed in terms of knowledge and concepts but enthused by their teachers' positive approach. All students spoken to confirmed their enjoyment of the course and how much they looked forward to the lessons. Students were consistently and individually challenged by their teacher's probing questions when working on their projects. Very rapid progress was achieved during a lesson on acquisition of language in children. The teacher's highly secure knowledge had clearly ensured very good familiarity on the part of the students with specialist terms such as *diphthong*, *anaphora* and *digraph*. The teacher's inventive use of audio resources offered a challenging miscue analysis activity that was carried out with considerable assurance given it was the students' first attempt. There are no major shortcomings in teaching but analysis of examination data and the students' assignments reveals some flaws in the effectiveness of some students' writing. To do justice to their understanding in examinations, some require a sharper understanding of the conventions of GCE A-level examination writing. The key skill of communication is taught in an outstanding manner. Other key skills are taught well.

Leadership and management

133. Leadership and management are very good. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement with results consistently well above average. The department responded to the challenge of new courses in 'Curriculum 2000' in a highly collaborative way. Improvements in the sharing of resources and schemes of work have spread best practice more widely to the benefit of all students. Monitoring of the students' progress is very good.

Modern Foreign Languages

French

Provision in French is **very good**

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at A-level have risen significantly since the previous inspection.
- Students learn very well because teaching is highly proficient and intellectually challenging.
- Students contribute to their very good achievement by their lively, positive attitudes.

- The modern foreign languages department offers much to students beyond the curriculum to help enrich their experience and broaden their horizons.

Commentary

Examination results

134. Results at A-level in French were well above the national average in 2002. Over the past four years up to 2002, students have on aggregate achieved nearly one grade higher than the national average, which represents very good achievement in relation to students' starting points. This represents consistently very good achievement and adds substance to the very good quality of work seen in lessons in Years 12 and 13.

Standards and achievement

135. Standards among students in the present Years 12 and 13 are well above average for the stage they have reached in the French course. Students in both years are achieving very well. In Year 12, for example, students have left well behind them the simplified structures of GCSE. They have very good understanding of their teachers who speak to them in fast, uncompromising French. Most of them, too, speak with impressive fluency and precision about the problems associated with young adulthood and the rights as well as the responsibilities that go with it. A few of these students are beginning to sound like young French people. Similarly high standards prevail in Year 13. Students are able to defend their own point of view in well-argued, coherent French. They have unusually good comprehension of native speakers, reflecting the very high quality of French to which they are exposed through their teachers and topical French media. Students also write very well in French and show real maturity of expression and a grasp of the complexities and rhythms of the French language.

Teaching and learning

136. Teaching is of a very high quality: enthusiastic, intellectually demanding and conducted almost entirely in French. Students therefore have no option but to listen carefully and they gain in understanding as a result. Teachers have very high expectations and do not duck difficult grammar or challenging issues such as AIDS in the Third World. They give students ample opportunities to express themselves in speaking and in writing. Questioning is very skilful and probing, ensuring that students stretch themselves and deepen their understanding. They make the most of these opportunities, often volunteering their opinion before it is asked for and asking intelligent questions to ensure they have understood. A very pleasant working rapport exists between students and their teachers. This further contributes to their very good learning. Students themselves warmly appreciate the quality of teaching they receive and the very good progress they are making. Teaching makes very good use of a variety of up-to-date texts and media, such as the Internet, for the potential they offer for exploiting language. Key skills are taught effectively, particularly the area of communication skills. Assessment of students' work is very thorough and helpful. Homework assignments encourage students to do independent study and research.

Leadership and management

137. As in the main school, leadership of modern foreign languages in the sixth form is very good. Management, too, is very efficient. Good communication between staff ensures that students make the most of being taught by more than one teacher. Numbers studying French, and German, in the sixth form are healthy and above the average for non-selective schools. A period of work experience in France is available, and taken up by most students, with considerable benefits to their French. Students have open access to the department's good resources and to the wide range of French literature in the school library. Since the previous inspection the department has moved forward significantly in the quality of teaching and the breadth of experience it offers to sixth form linguists. As a result of this, students are now

achieving better and standards overall are much higher. The department is very well placed to continue improving.

MATHEMATICS

The focus of the inspection was mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management ensure the expertise of teachers is used well.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject which results in them achieving very well.
- Results in GCE A-level examinations are well above average for the proportion attaining grades A-B.
- The quality of teaching is very good and as a result students make very good progress with learning.
- Very good assessment procedures ensure students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- Teaching methods do not include sufficient opportunities for students to learn independently or use practical activities to develop understanding.

Commentary

Examination results

138. In 2002, results were average in the AS examinations and well above average in the A-level examinations for grades A-B. This represents good achievement at AS level and very good achievement at A-level in relation to students' levels of attainment at the start of the course. Girls performed better than boys. 2003 results show an improvement at AS level and a similar well above average performance at A-level.

Standards and achievement

139. Overall, standards of work seen are well above average and students are achieving very well. In Year 13, students are making very good progress in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. All have successfully completed the AS modules with about one third achieving the higher grades A-B. Students have a very good understanding of functions and determining roots of equations in pure mathematics and, in mechanics, they have developed well their knowledge of momentum and its use when dealing with impact and collision of objects. Students doing further mathematics understand well the idea of interpolation in numerical methods and using approximations. Year 12 students are achieving well and attaining standards that are above average at this stage in the course.

Teaching and learning

140. The quality of teaching is very good and secures very good learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is very strong; new and difficult concepts are clearly explained. Relationships are very strong, with mutual respect shown between teachers and their students. The day-to-day assessment of students' work is very good; it supports students' learning very well so that they know how well they are doing. Students show very positive attitudes to the subject; they make determined efforts to understand the work they are doing with the result that they achieve very well. Teachers' planning is very good; computers and graphical calculators are used effectively to support teaching and learning. Discussions in lessons are generally good but questioning does not always involve enough students in responding to answers. Teaching methods do not provide sufficient opportunity for students to learn independently of the teacher or to use practical activities to develop understanding. The key skill relating to the application of number is taught in an excellent manner. Other key skills are taught well.

Leadership and management

141. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers are deployed well to ensure that their very good expertise is used well. The department works effectively as a team to ensure that students' work and progress is regularly checked. Assessment of students' work is very good; examination criteria are used accurately so that students know how well they are doing. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. The well above average standards have been maintained. Improved accommodation now meets the needs of sixth form teaching

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was biology. One physics lesson from each year was observed. Here, good teaching results in students making good progress and achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Standards are above average.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **very good**

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and facilitates very good learning
- Very good achievement by students has led to results which are well above average.
- Assessment and monitoring of students' progress is very good.

Commentary

Examination results

142. The 2002 AS and A-level results were well above average with a high proportion of the higher grades. In 2003 the results were not as good but not significantly lower. These results represent very good achievement for these students.

Standards and achievement

143. In Year 12, students are successfully building on work covered at GCSE level. In Year 13 standards are well above average and are on target to achieve similar results to recent examinations. Standards of written work are well above average with a high level of competence in literacy and numeracy, particularly the statistical handling of data in ecological survey work. Students express themselves very well orally and answer challenging questions with confidence. In Year 13, students displayed a good understanding of the mechanism of temperature control in mammals, and students in Year 12 were able to discuss the processes involved in digestion confidently. Students in both years are highly motivated. Teachers feel that they underachieve in the area of questions that test their understanding of biological concepts in the examinations and this is something, which needs to be practiced.

Teaching and learning

144. Teaching in biology is very good, enabling students to learn very well. Teachers show very good subject knowledge so that they are able to give clear explanations of facts and display an enthusiasm for the subject, which is passed on to the students. Lessons are well planned, have a brisk pace and include a variety of teaching and learning styles to maintain students' interest. Teachers have high expectations and ask some very challenging questions. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and students feel able to consult teachers at any time. Students are given the opportunity to foster their independent learning skills by undertaking research topics. The use of ICT by students is limited at present due to a lack of facilities but this is soon to be rectified by the provision of a computer suite specifically for the science department. Overall, ICT skills are taught satisfactorily and other key skills are taught very well. Homework is set and marked regularly and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons. Marking is constructive and gives clear guidance on areas for improvement. Good opportunities are provided for students to carry out fieldwork as part of their ecology topic. Students learn very well and make very good progress in lessons because of the very good teaching and also because they are mature and highly motivated. They respond well in lessons and rise to challenges as shown during question and answer sessions and are keen to contribute to class discussions.

Leadership and management

145. The department is very well led and managed. Staff work together as a team and are committed to the continued raising of achievement, meeting regularly to share information and expertise and review progress. Assessment, recording and monitoring of student progress are very good and used effectively to set targets. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory apart from the temporary lack of ICT facilities. The department receives good technical support. The high standards seen at the last inspection have been maintained.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not reported at last inspection

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and the students have positive attitudes to work so that they achieve well and attain above average standards.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they focus well on examination requirements so that students are encouraged to aspire to high standards.
- Assessment is used well to monitor the students' progress but marking standards are inconsistent.

Commentary

Examination results

146. Results in the AS and A-level examinations in 2002 were above average for grades A-E, with all the students achieving a pass grade. This was repeated in 2003 for both AS and A-level examinations. However, the proportion of passes at grades A and B was below average, reflecting to some extent the nature of the intake to the course at that time. Overall, in both years students achieved well.

Standards and achievement

147. By Year 13, students have a good grasp of the key ideas underlying their work in chemistry and they confidently carry out practical work based on the topics they have studied. They show good understanding of chemical equilibrium, reaction mechanisms and structural chemistry and they have an enquiring attitude that shows their appreciation of difficult concepts. They communicate their ideas well and have a good understanding of the mathematics needed to successfully carry out chemical calculations but they do not have enough opportunities to use computers in their routine work so standards in ICT are not as high as in other key skills. Students in both years achieve well and attain above average standards.

Teaching and learning

148. The quality of teaching is good, with some very good teaching in both years and no unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching of key skills is good, other than in ICT where current limitations on facilities available limit the provision and teaching is satisfactory. The teachers use their very good subject knowledge well to plan work that is challenging and meets the students' needs. They explain key ideas clearly, linking the work to real-life applications so that students can see the relevance of their studies. This helps them to achieve well and make good progress in their learning. Lessons are well organised and well managed. The students

respond well to this good teaching and have very positive attitudes to work so that relationships are good and they learn well. The teachers are knowledgeable about examination requirements so they are able to advise students how to improve their work and maximise their marks. They use assessment well to monitor the students' progress and to set targets but marking is inconsistent and does not always give enough guidance on how to tackle weaknesses in the work.

Leadership and management

149. Management of the subject is good and the acting head of chemistry has provided good leadership in establishing teamwork and reorganising courses to meet the students' needs. There are effective arrangements for teachers to share expertise, for example by conducting revision sessions with other teachers' groups and this helps to have a common sense of purpose. There has been a clear drive for improvement, with an understanding of the areas of relative weakness. This has led to changes in the management of courses and the entry requirements, so that standards have been maintained while making good progress since the last inspection. Students have positive views of the course and of the quality of teaching and a high proportion continue the course to gain passes at A-level.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students show good achievement in their learning because of good teaching and students' very good attitudes.
- Good leadership and management provide well-structured and supportive courses that enable students to achieve well.
- Regular formal testing is not consistently provided to ensure that students, especially those with lower literary skills, have consolidated their knowledge

Commentary

Examination results

150. Results in 2002 in A-level computer studies were below average and AS level results were well below average. Similar results were obtained in 2003.

Standards and achievement

151. Overall, standards are average at this stage in the course among Year 12 students and above average in Year 13. In Year 13, students now following the GCE A-level ICT course are achieving well because of the improved course structure and supportive teaching. Most students had limited specific ICT teaching in Years 7 to 11. Their achievement, therefore, from their prior knowledge and capability is good. For example Year 13 had rarely used databases. They now have a good understanding of how to use these to implement a reporting system for a school. Their planning and analysis of the requirements of their reporting system is good. Higher attaining students investigate the problem thoroughly. They understand the importance of ensuring that the needs of the user are kept to the forefront of the design. This is especially so when considering ease of use for a number of operators. Students show good research skills when investigating the Data Protection Act. They apply this well to different situations, for example, when producing a guidance poster on protecting information in a medical practice. Most students are confident and competent users of the software. However some, especially those of lower prior attainment, are less secure in writing detailed and relevant answers to questions. The teaching of key skills is good and students' attain above average standards that enable them to make full use of numeracy and communication skills in their courses.

Teaching and Learning

152. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers instigate good discussion by stimulating presentations and research tasks. Students participate fully as they have very good attitudes that enhance their learning. Teachers' questions are challenging and based upon a very good knowledge of the subject. Therefore students are made to think and respond. Students with special educational needs participate fully in lessons and make good progress because of the effective assistance they receive from their teachers and support assistants. Teachers analyse examination results well and take effective action to remedy former weaknesses, for example in the project work element of the course. Students' work is thoroughly marked and specific points for improvement are given. Relationships are very good. Teachers treat students like adults. There is a good working atmosphere in lessons with appropriate light touches of humour. Most students complete their ICT courses and many intend to continue with these in higher education. Provision of regular formal testing to ensure that students, especially those with lower literary skills, have consolidated their knowledge is not consistently provided.

Leadership and management

153. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work well together and learn from each other. Courses are now planned well so that sufficient time is given to each element. Teachers modify their methods accordingly to help students learn more effectively. Provision and standards have improved in recent months and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on history and geography. Two religious education lessons were seen, where teaching is good overall and students are achieving well. Numbers are growing for these courses. Two lessons in government and politics were observed where students were taught very well and their achievement is very good. This is a popular subject and students attained results above national levels in both GCE AS and A-level in 2002, and gained similar results in 2003. One psychology lesson was seen. Teaching is good overall and students are achieving well.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students' are achieving well because of good teaching and learning.
- Teachers plan lessons well and effectively introduce lessons to get students thinking hard from the outset.
- Students benefit from good progress reviews, which inform them of their strengths and weaknesses.
- Inadequate accommodation arrangements, (soon to be resolved), are making effective management difficult.

Commentary

Examination results

154. At GCE A-level in 2002, results were well above average in GCE at AS and A-level. The 2003 results were of a similar high standard and AS candidates gained even higher grades.

Standards and achievement

155. In the work seen in the inspection, students in Years 12 and 13 are attaining above average standards and their achievement is good. They are on line to meet their targets, that is, to reach the well above average standards obtained by the 2002 and 2003 groups. Year 13 students have made good progress since Year 12 in their increasing range and depth of work. They have a good understanding of geographical concepts and can use specialist terminology with ease. Year 12 students have a good understanding of, for example, processes affecting coastlines and are able to analyse the effects of multi-national corporations well. This is shown in the detailed written explanations of the more able students. However, the ability of lower attaining students to analyse is lacking and their use of specialist terms is less accurate. Standards in numeracy and communication are well above average because of the good

attention given to these areas. Standards are above average in ICT, which enables students to use these skills effectively in their research and their presentation of work.

Teaching and learning

156. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables them to explain concepts clearly and imaginatively. In a Year 12 lesson on sea level changes, the teacher used a model of Great Britain to demonstrate isostatic changes very effectively. Although lessons proceed at a good pace, some teachers lose time when they require students to copy from the board. Challenging and extending homework tasks are set which reinforce the good learning seen in lessons. Students' independent learning skills are developing well when they are encouraged to research and asked to select information to answer questions in writing. Teachers comment clearly on students' work and explain why the work is good or how to improve it. Students thrive where they are given the opportunity to give explanations and demonstrate their understanding orally. This was demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson on plate tectonics, when they had to explain features of the oceanic and continental crust to the rest of the group. In a lesson on over-population, students were given opportunities to give presentations to the group. Here the teacher's very good planning enabled students to demonstrate their understanding effectively and put over difficult concepts well. Students are pleased with their progress. They find some aspects more interesting than others but make full use of the learning opportunities provided. They enjoy geography because teachers are enthusiastic and put over their subject well. They listen attentively and work quietly in lessons but sometimes miss opportunities to discuss issues with each other.

Leadership and management

157. Management is satisfactory. Communications have been made difficult by the move to temporary accommodation, with resources being split and record keeping disrupted. The monitoring of progress within the department, which is informal and infrequent needs to be more systematic. Leadership is good. The head of department has ensured that the well-established team is working effectively together. There is a clear sense of purpose particularly with regard to reorganisation in the new teaching block. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and students achieve very well to attain standards in public examinations that are well above average.
- The guidance and support for students, formally and informally, through marking, reviews, and revision guides is very effective.
- Significant numbers of students progress to related degree courses because they are stimulated by the teaching they receive.
- The development of students' key skills in spoken and written communication is excellent.
- Some of the recent personal studies (coursework) have been outstanding.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

Commentary

Examination results

158. In 2002, results at GCE A-level were well above national levels, all gained grades, and achievement was excellent for both male and female students, some of the best results in the school. Results in 2003 broadly similar with very good achievement for most students. Year 12 students have achieved results above the national average in GCE AS for four years and the overall achievement of both male and female students is good in relation to their GCSE grades.

Standards and achievement

159. In the work seen in the inspection, students' standards overall on AS and A-level courses are above average at this stage of the course and on line to attain the well above average standards of recent years. Some students are already well above average, and most are achieving very well. In Year 13 students are able to engage in well-informed dialogue with their teachers on aspects of nineteenth century French internal history and British foreign history, making perceptive links to their previous learning so that they pull together synoptic views on examination questions. This is very helpful to structuring their written arguments effectively and will allow the students to gain the highest grades. Many personal studies, the coursework for A-level, are consistently of outstanding quality. The students take a high level of personal responsibility for their own success. They work hard, are interested and thoroughly engaged in their lessons, willing to prepare for lessons and to read widely. For their personal studies they are willing to visit the University of York and city libraries. They use the Internet well for research and with suitable critical caution. Students enjoy the many opportunities for discussion in the classroom, and most write fluently and with maturity. There is excellent development of their key skills of written and spoken communication in history. The skills of acquisition of number are developed satisfactorily.

Teaching and learning

160. Teaching is very good overall. Much is excellent. Teachers' expertise is excellent for this level, and they communicate a passion for history. Students perceive and respect this, and also know that they receive very good guidance. Marking is thorough and accurate, and referenced to the levels and criteria used by the examination boards. Students' files are scrutinised regularly as well as formal essays marked, and individual students' progress is regularly reviewed. Lessons are varied and well structured. They allow many opportunities for students to argue, discuss in groups and whole class, present a case or report back on findings. Teachers are imaginative in finding lively ways to present topics. In a Year 13 British history lesson, there was role-play so that students could re-enact Disraeli's cabinet meetings. In a Year 12 French history lesson, students benefited from the same system of an 'over arching question' as in the main school. Here the question related to how Napoleon was able to build and run an Empire. The lesson was very brisk, and learning was accrued at a very good rate.

The teacher challenged students in every way, including providing counter-arguments to the points they made. Most complete their courses and significant numbers progress further in history by choosing related degree courses because they are enthused by the teaching of the subject.

Leadership and management

161. The subject is very well led and managed, and the teaching team collaborate very effectively. As in the main school, the acting leader has provided continuity and stability for the students through a period of some staffing turbulence. Staff training is taken seriously and teachers keep up to date with their subject knowledge and with changing requirements. New staff are inducted and supported well. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection in maintaining high standards and reviewing and developing course materials. Good quality revision guides have been written. The students benefit from European history expeditions, last year to St. Petersburg and Moscow, and from the extra-curricular inter-school debating competitions run by the subject leader.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **good**

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have excellent attitudes to their work that leads to good achievement in both the product design and textiles technology courses.
- The quality of teaching is very good and is beginning to raise the level of students' attainment.
- The product design and textiles technology courses are well led and managed.

Commentary

Examination results

162. In 2002, GCE A-level results in product design were broadly in line with the national average. Of the thirteen entries, twelve achieved pass grades and four students achieved the higher grades A and B. In 2003 the results of the nineteen students entered were similar with all achieving pass grades and six at the higher grades A and B. Results at AS in 2002, were below average, particularly in terms of the proportion of passes at the higher grades. The main reason for this was the relatively low attainment of students on entry to the courses.

Standards and achievement

163. In the work seen in the inspection, the students are currently working at a similar standard to recent years. Their level of achievement is good on the product design AS and A-level courses and the newly introduced AS-level textiles course. There are strong indications on all three courses that standards are rising due to the excellent attitudes of the students and teaching which is consistently very good. Achievement at this stage is good rather than very good because students are coping with a limited background in the subject. Although some students start the courses with GCSE grades B and C, a good proportion of them start the textiles course without having studied the subject at GCSE. After one term and from this low starting point, students in Year 12 are beginning to demonstrate good knowledge, understanding and skills in all areas of their courses. Making skills are very well developed and the standard of graphical communication skills of some students is above average. Design skills are at least average and students have good analytical and evaluation skills which are applied to the products they design and make as well as artefacts and products made by other people. Students make extensive use of ICT in all areas of their work including designing and making, using computer-aided design and manufacturing particularly on the product design course. These ICT skills and other key skills are developed well and students standards are above average. Overall, male and female students are achieving at similar levels.

Teaching and learning

164. The quality of teaching is very good on all three courses. This consistent, very good teaching is starting to have a positive impact on standards and standards are rising. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and know the standards and requirements of the syllabus to be studied. Lessons are planned very well and teaching methods are very well matched to the content to be delivered. The resources for learning are good and students are very well supported and encouraged by the staff who maintain very high expectations of them. Overall, the very good teaching, allied to the very positive approaches taken by the students, is offsetting their below average starting points, ensuring that they attain average standards and achieve well.

Leadership and management

165. The leadership and management of the two courses offered are good. The GCE A-level results have been slightly improved since the previous inspection and are now in line with the national average. The courses are very well organised and led within the design and technology department. Almost all the staff in the department are involved in the teaching of AS and A2-level courses and they are deployed to make the most effective use of their specialist expertise, including team teaching when appropriate.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was art and design. Theatre studies, music and film studies were also sampled. Teaching and learning were very good in a Year 13 theatre studies lesson. Students achieved well and reached above average standards as a result of the lesson's very fast pace, the high level of challenge and the very good subject knowledge of an experienced teacher. Students' attitudes were very good. In music, lessons in Year 12 and 13 were observed. Students are achieving well. They are very good practical performers and working hard to develop their listening and appraising skills. The teacher's expert subject knowledge challenges the students and there is good use of technology to support learning. Film studies is a new course introduced by the English department. One excellent Year 12 lesson was observed. Students were constantly challenged by the fast pace of the lesson. They made excellent progress and responded very well to the analysis of film. The subject expertise of the teacher was outstanding.

Art and design

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

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- Leadership and management are both excellent and this has led to the department making very good progress since the last inspection.
- Teaching overall is very good, securing very good learning and ensuring that students achieve very well.
- Assessment and appraisal are very good and ensure students know how to improve their work.
- Students' attitudes are excellent and they show exemplary behaviour in lessons and excellent capacity to work independently.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The sixth form do not have their own studio and space is too cramped for them to develop three-dimensional work in comfort.
- The department has only one computer, which prevents much ICT access in lessons.

Commentary

Examination results

166. Results in the 2002 AS examinations were near the national average for grades A-E but were below for grades A-B. Results in the A-level examinations were above average for grades A-E, but were well below for grades A-B. Entry numbers are rising and results in 2003 were better than those in 2002.

Standards and achievement

167. In work seen during the inspection, standards in art and design are well above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. This represents an improvement over recent results because these students are achieving very well and are talented in art. They are also responding well to the demands of the courses, which are designed to stretch the students' thinking as well as their skills in all art media. All students show very good improvement upon their GCSE grades and particularly in portraiture and figurative drawing. They are skilled in experimenting with montage and collage and use materials imaginatively. Their paintings and drawings have good composition, colour, tone and texture, showing understanding about placement and proximity and overall impact, especially when doing work on a large scale. Students display confidence when speaking about the development of their own artwork and when criticising and appraising others' work. They use correct terminology and defend their arguments, supplementing these by referring to personal research and experiments. They annotate sketchbooks and work journals clearly, defending decisions and explaining the train of thought. The highest attaining students are more adept at showing ingenuity when designing and confidence in developing

their personal styles. Communication skills are particularly well fostered and taught, resulting in well above average standards. In other areas of key skills too, standards are high and enable students to cope well with the demands of their courses.

Teaching and learning.

168. The quality of teaching is very good and this coupled with exemplary attitudes of students and the quality and amount of work done in and out of lessons, brings about very good learning. The students are committed to art and enjoy being taught by different teachers for different aspects of the course. They appreciate that they are gaining from individuals' expertise. There are no weaknesses in the teaching and it is particularly strong in subject knowledge, planning, using a variety of appropriate methods, and creating very positive relationships. The scheme of work is challenging and helps the students to develop creativity and innovation; it increases their knowledge of art in general and extends the skills amassed in the early years in school. Appraisal of work is very good, as students have quality time with teachers to discuss what has been done, how it could be improved and how they might develop work from a different approach or in other media. Teachers encourage students to conduct research and present their work as professionally as possible, by showing skill in using ICT, but as yet do not have enough equipment.

Leadership and management

169. Leadership and management are excellent. The leadership of the head of department ensures a very clear direction to its work and colleagues and students regard the head of department as a very skilful leader who is well respected. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. The development plan includes intentions and teaching strategies to improve results in examinations, plans for extended visits to stimulate the students, aims to invite practising artists into the department to share techniques. Also, the department has well-formulated plans to increase the use of ICT, and reasoned arguments for requesting additional space for practical work in three-dimensions. Improved practices in connection with these intentions have brought about improved standards. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, as the sixth form students do not have their own studio and cannot always access the art rooms when other pupils are having lessons.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was leisure and recreation. One lesson was seen involving Year 13 students in a travel and tourism lesson. Both teaching and learning were very good. Students achieved well and displayed very good independent study skills in their research.

Leisure and recreation

Provision in leisure and recreation is **good**.

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and this secures good learning, but formal planning is a weaker feature.
- The very positive attitudes the students apply to their work ensure good achievement.
- The course of study meets the students' needs and aspirations well.
- There is no coherent strategic vision for the development of the subject.

Commentary

Examination results

170. In 2002, results were well below average. This reflected the students' prior attainment and personal difficulties of some of the students concerned. In 2003, results were significantly higher, and students did better in this subject than they did in other examinations that they took.

Standards and achievement

171. In the work seen in the inspection, the standard of work in Year 12 is average and in Year 13, is below average. In both year groups, the students are doing better than their prior attainment would have suggested. Both year groups are achieving well. Key skills are well developed and are above average. The Year 12 students have firmly grasped the concept of the product life cycle and are able confidently to identify the characteristics of the concept and transfer them when evaluating various manufactured and organic products. In Year 13, the students have for several years managed very large-scale charitable events, as a practical example of the skills deriving from their studies. In doing so they have raised significant amounts of funding for selected local charities and shown their good levels of skill, commitment and organising abilities. A close examination of students' written work shows growing knowledge and understanding of the subject with consistently good presentation and well thought-out and constructive notes. This underlines their good achievement.

Teaching and learning

172. Teaching is good overall and promotes good learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and challenge the students to produce work of good quality, quickly. When the pace of a lesson drops, learning becomes more limited in scope. These students respond well to demanding tasks. When challenging teaching techniques are used, the students engage very effectively, and turn around work very rapidly. Relationships between students and teachers, and between the students themselves are very positive. Students are often encouraged to work and research independently, and they do this very productively. The combination of good teaching and learning, with the students' very good attitudes, ensures that the students achieve well overall irrespective of their previous standards of attainment.

Leadership and management

173. Leadership and management of the department are both satisfactory. There is a balance of strengths and weaknesses in both areas. The strengths are: dedicated, caring and committed teaching; detailed knowledge of course content; an experienced, skilled and well-balanced team; and good accommodation and resources. All of these contribute effectively to good learning and good achievement by the students. The weaknesses are the lack of: properly planned schemes of work for teaching; systematic methods of curriculum development; a strategic rationale for the future development of the subject and its contribution to the learning of students. The subject has yet to take full advantage of the good practice existing in other vocational areas of the school.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was business studies.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **excellent**.

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Excellent	Excellent
Teaching and Learning	Excellent	Excellent

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is excellent from a wide range of starting points because teaching methods and courses are very well matched to needs.
- ICT is integrated very effectively into all aspects of teaching and learning.
- The "real world" is a very strong feature of all aspects of teaching and learning.
- Students' attitudes are excellent because of the variety and challenge in the teaching.

Commentary

Examination results

174. A-level results in 2002 were average. Girls' results were well above average showing very good achievement. Boys' results were well below average showing satisfactory achievement. A-level results in 2003 were similar to the girls' results for 2002 for both boys and girls, showing excellent achievement. AVCE results in 2002 were very high showing excellent achievement. AVCE results in 2003 were similar with not quite as high a proportion of A and B grades but again showing excellent achievement. AS results in 2002 were well above average showing very good achievement. AS results in 2003 were similar, showing excellent achievement when account is taken of the starting point of these students.

Standards and achievement

175. Research and investigation skills develop very well in Years 12 and 13 particularly through using both ICT and primary research methods. The excellent teaching and provision in ICT enables both A-level and AVCE students to achieve very high standards in coursework by the end of Year 13 including the investigation of national and international business organisations and the marketing of new products. The quality of original research is impressive, including the work of students whose GCSE achievement is no higher than average. It is striking how students from relatively low starting points achieve very high standards in their coursework by producing detailed and original research. This work in particular shows excellent achievement. Year 12 students display a very good grasp of different forms of business organisation at an early stage in both courses. AS students show an excellent grasp of how a major company re-

organised following a downturn in its market share. AVCE students are able to apply theoretical concepts very well to case studies of major companies. ICT skills overall are a very striking feature of students' achievement. Students are highly selective in their use of websites in research activities. They are not "overawed" by a large-scale investigation, for example AVCE students researching features of the European Union. "Real world" knowledge is another striking feature of students' achievement, for example A-level students' very good level of knowledge of the factors influencing the location of local and national businesses. Other key skills are well above average and are taught very effectively. Thus, students' communication skills are a positive feature of their work and their acquisition of number ensures that they cope very well with high demands made on them.

Teaching and learning

176. The integration of ICT into teaching methods is excellent. Students learn about the very latest developments. In one lesson seen, the chancellor's pre-budget report from the previous afternoon was accessed from the Internet and used as part of a lesson the following morning. A library of video clips is used to very good effect, for example a recorded interview giving an excellent summary of factors influencing location of companies. ICT is used very well to summarise key lesson objectives during lessons. Students make very good use of ICT in presenting the results of their own investigations to the rest of the class. Teacher's up-to-date knowledge of business and the economy is excellent. This in turn motivates students in their own learning. Their attitudes are excellent. They are independent learners and this is illustrated very well by their use of the Internet. Students know the relevant websites because of very high quality lesson planning and they are very focused in their investigations. Independent study skills are excellent. They use their initiative and produce a high quality finished product. Difficult ideas and theories are made accessible through deliberately using a variety of methods that emphasise real world applications rather than textbook theory.

Leadership and management

177. Both leadership and management have been very effective in raising achievement. ICT has been very successfully integrated into teaching and learning so that students are independent learners and use their initiative very well. The ethos of the department is one that is firmly rooted in the real world and not in textbooks and this in turn is a very strong motivator. Links with real businesses are very strong and provide an excellent focus for learning. There is a very strong focus in planning to prioritise developments that will raise achievement. Self-evaluation is very strong with a very thorough analysis of value-added and targets both for specific courses and for individual students. Progress from the last inspection is very good.

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	2	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	3
Overall standards achieved		2
Students' achievement	2	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	5	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the head teacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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