

INSPECTION REPORT

WESTHOUGHTON HIGH SCHOOL

Westhoughton, Bolton

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105252

Headteacher: Brendan Loughran

Lead inspector: Roger Holmes

Dates of inspection: 1st – 5th December 2003

Inspection number: 260794

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 – 18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1272

School address: Bolton Road
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Bolton
Postcode: BL5 3BZ

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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr J Hayes

Date of previous inspection: November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Westhoughton High School is a large, mixed 11-18 comprehensive with 1272 pupils on roll, serving the small town of Westhoughton to the west of Bolton. The great majority of the pupils are white. They come from a range of social backgrounds, which, on the whole, are more disadvantaged than in most schools. Pupils' attainment when they come into the school has been rising steadily. It is now about average, but the attainment on entry of the pupils who have just taken GCSE examinations was below average.

The school has grown since its last inspection and is oversubscribed. It received a Schools Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2632	Roger Holmes	Lead inspector	
13448	Dawn Lloyd	Lay inspector	
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10782	Henry Morton	Team inspector	Mathematics
5985	Mike Holland	Team inspector	Science
18076	Howard Dodd	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art and design
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14573	Hugh Waring	Team inspector	Geography
8873	Charlotte Evers	Team inspector	History
3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
29351	Leslie-Ann Pearson	Team inspector	Music
2628	Jim Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education
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7958	Gina Lewis	Team inspector	Special educational needs
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Westhoughton High School provides a **satisfactory standard of education**. It is improving strongly under the new headteacher's leadership. Teaching is satisfactory and pupils make sound progress overall. The school provides sound value for money.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's leadership is very good.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in most subjects by the end of Year 9, but they do not move forward so well in Years 10 and 11, so that overall, progress and achievement are satisfactory.
- Much of the teaching is good, but in some lessons, pupils are not managed well enough.
- Most pupils behave well, but a few are disruptive in some lessons.
- Despite recent improvements, accommodation is unsatisfactory and the library is inadequate, particularly for sixth form use.
- There are strong links with the community and with other schools.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The sixth form is developing well under very effective leadership.

Most of the issues raised in the last inspection have been tackled, but, until the last year or so, Westhoughton High School has not responded as vigorously to change as many other schools. Recently, developments have been rapid, so that overall, the school has made satisfactory progress

Standards achieved	in all schools			in similar schools 2003
	2001	2002	2003	
Year 11	C	B	D	D
Year 13	D	B	N/A	N/A

Overall, pupils' **achievement is satisfactory**, but they make more rapid progress in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 are close to the national average, which represents good progress by the pupils concerned from their starting point when they joined the school. Overall, results have been rising in line with the national trend. The standards of work seen during the inspection were sound in most subjects, below average in art and modern languages and above average in English and geography at this stage.

GCSE results were below average in 2003, after being average in 2002. Both of these results represent less progress from Year 9 than is achieved by pupils in most schools, and this is the main issue that the school needs to address and is tackling. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were average in most subjects; they were lower than average in mathematics, a little below in history and religious education, and higher in English and music. This represents good achievement in many subjects; mathematics is the only subject where achievement is not high enough.

Students in the sixth form generally achieve better results at A-level than would be predicted from their GCSE performance. They achieve well in most subjects, very well in modern foreign languages, satisfactorily in science and art, but not well enough in mathematics.

Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well in the Atlas Centre and make good progress overall. Gifted and talented pupils achieve as well as they should.

Pupils' personal qualities are developed well by the school. Most have positive attitudes to learning, but a few do not value the school enough and are occasionally disruptive. This issue is being addressed vigorously by the school, by changing the curriculum and the way it is taught.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Many lessons were very effective and over two thirds were good, very good or excellent. However, a few are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11. This is mainly due to the disruptive behaviour of a few pupils not being managed well enough so that it affects the learning of the class, often in lessons taken by teachers new to the school. In the great majority of lessons teaching is successful because teachers know their subject well and make lessons lively and interesting. Many lessons make very effective use of interactive whiteboards and the pupils are often involved closely in lessons through skilful questioning and well-managed discussions.

The curriculum has been revised to match the needs and interests of the pupils more closely. Year 10 pupils have been able to choose from a wider range of courses than Year 11 pupils. As a result their standards of work and attitudes to school are better. Some courses make very effective links with the wider community and the arrangements for some pupils to work at Bolton Community College are very successful. There is a good range of extra activities to support the curriculum.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led and managed. The recently appointed headteacher provides very effective leadership and is taking the school forwards strongly. He is well supported by the senior leadership group, but the school is currently without a second deputy headteacher and this makes the task of improving the school harder. Most subject departments are led and managed well. They have good systems in place to raise standards and a strong sense of purpose. However, others, such as art and music, are less well organised and this affects their performance adversely.

The governing body are well informed and strongly committed to the school. They carry out their role well and play a significant part in the school's improvement. Some statutory requirements are not met.

Parents' and pupils' views of the school

Overall, parents have a positive view of the school. They believe that their children make good progress, but a significant number are worried about behaviour. Pupils say that they are taught well, but also have some concerns about behaviour. They also recognise that the school is improving and moving forward strongly.

Improvements needed

The most important things the school should do to improve are as follows. (They have already been identified by the school and are being tackled.)

- Improve the progress that pupils make in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that strategies to improve behaviour continue to be developed and implemented across the school.
- Tackle the small proportion of teaching that is unsatisfactory.

and to meet statutory requirements:

- Seek to promote a daily act of collective worship.

- Ensure religious education is taught in the sixth form.

THE SIXTH FORM AT WESTHOUGHTON HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provision is **satisfactory**. Standards are **average**. Students achieve **satisfactorily** given their attainment on entry to the sixth form. This is because they are taught **well** and have very positive attitudes to work. They are supported very well and given responsibilities which help them to develop well as young adults. The leadership and management are **very good**. The sixth form is **cost effective**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good.
- Very well-managed links with a local college and high school provide a broad curriculum.
- The data the school collects on students' attainment and progress is not used well enough.

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	Provision in English is good . Standards are above average . Teaching is very good . Students are enthusiastic about the subject. Provision in French is very good . Standards are above average . Teaching and achievement are very good . Leadership is excellent .
Mathematics	Provision is unsatisfactory . Standards are below average . Teaching is satisfactory . Too many students do not gain a pass, especially at AS-level.
Science	Provision in physics is good . Standards are average . Teaching and learning are good and achievement is satisfactory .
Information and communication technology	Provision is good . Standards have risen and are now average . Students achieve well as a result of strong teaching .
Humanities	Provision in history is good . Standards are average . Good teaching leads to good learning and achievement. Students' attitudes are very positive.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is good . Standards are average . Good teaching promotes good learning and achievement.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students are supported well. Tutors know them well, relationships are good and students are helped to make good progress in their studies through careful monitoring and encouragement. Preparation for the next stage of education or movement into work is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The recently appointed head of sixth form has made good progress in implementing the school's aim to extend the curriculum in order to better meet the needs of its students. He has a clear vision for the further development of the sixth form provision. The links with a local college, another high school and a training provider are very well managed. The academic performance of students is monitored satisfactorily, but the information is not used effectively enough to track their progress and achievement.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students like the school and feel that the sixth form is a community in its own right. They feel that teachers know them, and treat them as adults. They believe that their views are listened to and taken into account. They feel that they received sufficient information to enable them to choose appropriate courses before entering the sixth form. They would like more enrichment activities, and a larger sixth form block. The inspection team agree that the range of extra-curricular activities for the sixth form is small.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards of work in the school are broadly in line with national averages at the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents sound achievement overall, but pupils are making better progress up to Year 9 than later.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress in most subjects in Years 7 to 9, and achieve well.
- By Year 9, standards are generally in line with national averages, but there is some variation between subjects.
- Pupils have not made as much progress in Years 10 and 11 as in most schools and GCSE results dipped in 2003.
- Pupils' achievement is better in Year 10 than in Year 11, reflecting changes to the curriculum.

Commentary

1. Pupils' attainment when they come into the school is now close to the national average. It has been rising steadily over recent years; the group of pupils who took GCSE in 2003 were below average when they joined the school.
2. Progress is generally good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils catch up in most subjects as a result of effective teaching. The quality of their work in English plays a big part here. Standards in the subject itself are good and the skills pupils develop help them to do well in other subjects, such as geography and history. Considering their starting points, pupils achieve very well at this stage in English and geography as well as in design and technology, history, information and communication technology (ICT), and religious education. In all other subjects, achievement is satisfactory.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36 (32.7)	33.5 (33.3)
Mathematics	35 (34.7)	34.9 (34.7)
Science	34 (32.7)	33.4 (33.3)

There were 228 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. This good rate of progress has not been maintained in Years 10 and 11 and GCSE results have not been as good as they should be, particularly in 2003. This has been due to a combination of factors, including relatively low results in mathematics and science, which are taken by almost all pupils, and a narrow range of subjects for pupils to choose from, which has led to some frustration and encouraged inappropriate behaviour. Standards are now rising as a result of action taken to tackle these issues. They are still not high enough in mathematics, where staffing difficulties have led to particular problems, but in other subjects standards reflect at least satisfactory achievement, and in English, design and technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education, achievement is good.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	38 (53)	49.9 (49.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (91)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	33 (41.5)	40 (39.8)

There were 211 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Changes to the curriculum that have been brought in to raise attainment are already having an impact on standards in Year 10. Performance in vocational courses in this year, such as business education and leisure and tourism, is good, and pupils are also doing well on the work-related courses run in conjunction with Bolton Community College. Higher attaining pupils are stretched in many subjects and also benefit from a specialised vocational ICT course.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement at A-level is good overall.
- Results at AS-level were lower than they should have been in 2003.
- Male students do relatively better than females.

Commentary

5. Students are accepted in to the sixth form with lower qualifications at GCSE than in many schools. Consequently they have to make more progress than in other schools to achieve the same results. They achieve this in most subjects as a result of strong teaching and their own positive attitudes. Achievement is very good in modern languages, good in English, design and technology, history and geography, and sound in science and art. In mathematics achievement has not been good enough, particularly at AS-level.

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	99.3	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	33.8	39.4
Average point score per pupil	77.2	78.6

There were 48 pupils in the year group.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities – main school

6. Most have positive attitudes to learning and behave satisfactorily, although behaviour in lessons and around the school is sometimes not good enough. Social and moral values are developed pupils well, but pupils lack some awareness of the multicultural nature of their own society. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are good and improving, as a result of effective monitoring systems.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils are well motivated, try hard and behave well, especially when teachers have high expectations and relationships are good.
- A significant minority of pupils lack self discipline and have poor listening skills, so that their own learning and that of others is frequently disrupted.
- Behaviour around the school is sometimes thoughtless and inconsiderate, particularly in the narrow corridors.
- There is good provision for pupils' social and moral development.
- Many pupils are keen to take part in activities outside lessons, to take on responsibility and show initiative.
- There has been a significant improvement in pupil's attendance.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence

Unauthorised absence

School data

8.0

School data

0.9

National data

7.8

National data

1.2

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

7. In many lessons pupils settle quickly and sensibly to their work and try to do their best. Their interest and enthusiasm are evident in the way they eagerly answer questions or offer opinions. They understand what they need to do to improve and, because they want to do well, they maintain their concentration throughout the lesson. Good relationships between pupils and teachers lead to effective learning. For example, a group of Year 11 pupils in the lowest set for French responded well to their teacher's lively, challenging approach because they wanted to please her.
8. There is an element of disruptive behaviour in some lessons, mainly caused by the inability of some pupils to listen and to do as they are told. They are wholly unaware of the impact of their poor behaviour on their own achievement and of the consequent effect upon other pupils. Even when they are interested and keen to take part, much valuable time is wasted while teachers seek to control indiscriminate chatter and to redirect pupils' attention to the main focus of the

lesson. At worst, a minority of pupils can be rude and deliberately aggressive, particularly with teachers who are inexperienced or new to the school. This problem has been recognised and ongoing training in behaviour management has been introduced to help deal with it. When teachers insist on appropriate behaviour, good listening, polite answering and attention to work, pupils usually respond well.

9. Around the school a few pupils sometimes show disregard for the needs of others. While behaviour on the whole is controlled and sensible, some pupils push their way through the narrow corridors. Relationships between pupils are mainly good and they maintain that bullying is not an issue, but some isolated examples of boisterous behaviour were seen during the inspection. Numbers of fixed term exclusions are relatively high as a result of the school's deliberate policy of challenging unacceptable behaviour, but permanent exclusions are low. Exclusion is only used as a last resort and careful procedures are in place to encourage improved behaviour when pupils return to school.
10. Underpinning the school's efforts to encourage good behaviour and relationships is the effective provision for social and moral education. The Respect Code, which is known and understood by pupils, teaches them to have regard for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Through assemblies, personal and social education and religious education, pupils are helped to develop a sense of morality and social responsibility. Study of topics such as solvent abuse, euthanasia, marriage and self-esteem enables pupils to explore and clarify their own feelings and to understand how these relate to wider issues.
11. Many pupils demonstrate their growing maturity by taking part in a wide variety of additional activities that allow them to pursue special interests and to develop personal and social skills. Their achievements are often spectacular, as in the extremely polished, professional student newspaper and the highly successful Young Enterprise companies have a tradition of reaching regional and national finals. The newly established school council has already had considerable impact on matters that affect pupils directly and is a very good example of how pupils are learning to accept the responsibilities of living within a community.

Sixth form

12. Students in the sixth form have very positive attitudes to school, as is shown by their good attendance. They show good application to their studies and are well motivated. Relationships with teachers are constructive, so that students are at ease in lessons and participate confidently. Students respond very well to the school's high expectations of them and, although they have little contact with pupils in the main school, they are conscious of the need to set a good example in the way they conduct themselves. Students show their commitment to the school by taking part in marketing exercises for the sixth form and by helping with community projects, such as the recent Robot Day. There is a strong community spirit among students, who want to see their sixth form flourish and grow.

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	1211	117	2
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0

Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	13	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	10	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	18	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory and improving**. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and in many lessons it is considerably better. The curriculum is good and is being developed to match the needs of pupils even more closely, both in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The great majority of lessons are very effective and many are very good, but a few are unsuccessful, mainly because pupils' behaviour is not good enough. This issue is being addressed by the school and behaviour is improving. Teaching is most effective in the sixth form, where no unsatisfactory lessons were seen, and in Years 10 and 11 where almost 70 per cent of lessons were good or better.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good.
- Teachers generally know their subjects well and make lessons interesting.
- Relationships with pupils are generally good, but in a few lessons pupils behave badly and this is not managed well enough by the teacher.
 - Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well in the Atlas Centre.
- Whole-school systems of assessment are very well designed and focus on raising standards, but procedures in some subjects remain unsatisfactory.

Commentary

13. Two thirds of lessons were good, very good or excellent. Pupils made good progress as a result of the quality of the teaching. In lessons where teaching is good or better, relationships are good, and teachers know their subject well and make lessons lively and interesting. Pupils respond well to these lessons, play an active part and take pride in doing good work.
14. In the few lessons which were not satisfactory, the disruptive behaviour of some pupils was not managed well enough by the teacher and so the class did not learn as well as they should have done. Most of these lessons involved teachers new to the school, but occurred with pupils in all years up to Year 11 and with groups covering the full ability range. Problems often arise from pupils not settling to their tasks at the start of the lesson, calling out and ignoring the teacher.
15. The great majority of lessons avoid these problems, partly as a result of the development work that has been undertaken and the discussions that staff have had about the features of a successful lesson. The school has made effective use of research into preferred learning styles and behaviour management. There has also been considerable investment in equipment such as interactive whiteboards.
16. Most lessons have an initial activity to help pupils settle as they come into the room. Several teachers use music to create a positive atmosphere, and in several cases turning the music down is the signal for pupils to stop and listen. Many lessons use discussion well, with the teacher asking questions to stimulate the pupils' ideas. In many cases, pupils demonstrate better understanding through their oral work than in their writing.
17. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs within the Atlas Centre are very good. In the main school it is good overall. Some teachers identify pupils with specific learning difficulties and cater well for their needs. In these lessons, pupils who have been identified as having challenging behaviour are happily engaged and able to cope with the work provided. However, in a few cases, too little attention is paid to adapting the work and presenting subject skills and knowledge to pupils with special needs and teachers sometimes do not make good enough use of support when this is available.
18. Assessment is seen by the school as a key instrument for raising standards, and very good procedures have been put place; however, the implementation of this system varies from subject to subject. It is implemented very well in English, history and modern foreign languages, but assessment is as yet unsatisfactory in mathematics, physical education,

music, and religious education. It is unsatisfactory in art in Years 7 to 9. Citizenship is still too new as a subject for assessment procedures to be fully in place. Some teachers, for example in English, history or religious education, provide very detailed comments in their marking, but marking in other subjects is more variable.

Sixth form

19. Teaching in the sixth form is good and students learn well. Teachers know their subjects thoroughly, and use their depth of knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject to inspire their students. Lessons are purposeful and students are fully involved, knowing what they are expected to achieve and taking a lively part in their learning.
20. Teaching is particularly strong in English and in modern foreign languages. Students respond very well to the high expectations that teachers have of their commitment. Lessons demand a lot from the students, for example detailed analysis of characters' motivations in Shakespeare's plays. Relationships are very positive so that students can explore ideas confidently and teachers' questioning is often skilful, drawing out half-formed ideas and encouraging discussion.
21. Assessment in the sixth form is good. Internal examinations closely reflect external requirements. Targets are reviewed in consultation with tutors three times a year, but students retain responsibility for their own progress and are expected to complete a self-assessment sheet before meeting their tutors. The overall aim is to raise standards and this is being achieved.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 175 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (4%)	45 (26%)	66 (38%)	44 (25%)	11 (6%)	2 (1%)	0

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

The curriculum

Curricular provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a willingness to be innovative in adapting the curriculum to the needs of pupils.
- There is a good range of courses in Years 10 and 11.
- The links with the local college of further education to provide vocational courses are very effective.
- The arrangements for teaching French and German in Year 7 are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

22. The school provides a curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 11 which is generally broad and balanced, and enables the majority of pupils to achieve well both academically and personally. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements for personal, health and social education (PHSE), citizenship, religious education and for ICT (the last was identified as not meeting requirements at the previous inspection). The requirements for a daily act of collective worship of a broadly Christian nature are not met.
23. The curriculum has recently been evaluated and modified to improve its relevance to pupils in Years 7 to 11. In doing this the school has shown clear willingness to innovate where

appropriate and to take advantage of increasing opportunities for flexibility in the curriculum. There is good provision for the most able pupils through courses in ICT and in science master-classes after school. The school has enabled students to take the GCSE examination in Year 10 in English and statistics, to motivate both disaffected pupils and the high attainers.

24. There are, however, some weaknesses in the curriculum. The planned arrangements for teaching French and German in alternate terms to Year 7 are unsatisfactory because of the lack of continuity of study this creates. Within the physical education course in Years 7 to 9, dance is offered to girls but not to boys.
25. The teaching time meets that recommended overall. The time allocated to ICT is, however, insufficient.
26. Good links with a local college enable a group of pupils in Year 10 to spend two days a week following vocational courses there. The timetable is carefully planned so that they follow a core GCSE course on the days when they are in school. The school has firm plans to extend this good provision.
27. The school offers a good range of clubs and activities to enrich pupils' curricular experience, both during the short lunch break and after school, and these are largely well attended. There is a wide range of visits and residential opportunities. Participation in sport at lunchtimes and after school is satisfactory. Opportunities to study Spanish and Japanese are provided by a local Specialist Languages College as extra-curricular study. The Young Enterprise group is a very useful opportunity for pupils to extend their understanding of business.
28. The school provides good opportunities for study support through homework clubs, revision classes after school and in holiday time, and through links with Bolton Wanderers FC Study Support Centre
29. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The support given in Years 7 to 9 for pupils with specific needs in literacy is very good. The withdrawal in the Atlas Centre is well focused and ensures that pupils are enabled to access all areas of the curriculum. Specific assistance is given to pupils who are being re-integrated into school. Pupils who have behavioural difficulties receive individual tuition in both key stages so that they can re-join the main school.
30. In Years 7 to 9, provision is concentrated on improving behaviour and attitudes, literacy and numeracy skills. Targets are set for pupils receiving individual help, who make very good progress in the Atlas Centre. Some pupils do experience difficulty when they return to lessons and insufficient attention is paid to their specific needs.
31. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive help with the subject coursework set by subject teachers. The Atlas Centre provides a calm and peaceful working environment for these pupils but the amount of assistance and guidance provided by teaching assistants in these years is constrained by their lack of specialist knowledge. Consideration is being given to a more specific deployment of teaching assistants who have particular skills.

Staffing

32. The school has sufficient teaching staff, and almost all lessons are taught by specialist teachers. There has been a high turnover of staff in mathematics. At the time of the inspection there were two temporary teachers in physical education. This instability in staffing leads to some poor attitudes among some pupils, who take advantage of inexperienced or temporary staff.

33. The provision of support staff for pupils with special educational needs is good, but there are insufficient technical support staff in design and technology, which means that teachers have to spend too much time preparing materials.

Resources

34. Resources are adequate overall. However, in English, modern foreign languages and religious education, more sets of text and work books are needed to satisfy examination requirements and supplement dwindling stocks. More computers are needed in design and technology, geography, history, science and special needs departments. The science department data-logging equipment is inadequate and an interactive whiteboard is required in religious education to develop new teaching strategies. Although the ICT department is well provided for, some of the computers do not have CD-ROM drives, so pupils cannot always search for information that is suited to their reading levels. The stock of consumable materials is low in design and technology and there are not enough tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments in music, so the department has to rely heavily on keyboards and the out-of-tune piano. The learning resource centre is not well enough stocked and does not support pupils' learning well enough.

Accommodation

35. Overall, accommodation in the school is unsatisfactory. It is good in ICT, unsatisfactory in geography and mathematics, where room sizes are too small for the number of pupils, and unsatisfactory in music where there is a shortage of electrical sockets. There is no gymnasium for physical education and the dance studio is too small for a full class. Good use, however, is made of the community sports hall and swimming pool. The Atlas Centre provides very good accommodation for pupils with special educational needs and staff. In other curriculum areas the accommodation is generally satisfactory but some requires refurbishment to bring it up to modern standards. Some of the partitioning does not provide sufficient soundproofing. There are inadequate social areas for pupils, corridors are narrow and staircases very crowded at lesson changes. This has a negative impact on the behaviour of some pupils.

Sixth form curriculum

Curricular provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good links with other schools and colleges in the post-16 collaborations.
- The curriculum is being expanded to meet the needs of the students more closely.
- The requirements for a daily act of collective worship and of the local agreement on the provision of religious education are not met.
- There is no PHSE course.

Commentary

36. The sixth form curriculum was criticised as narrow and fragmented at the previous inspection. The school has made good progress since then and now offers a satisfactory range of courses at AS and A-level, which adequately meets the needs of its students. It has recently made changes to the curriculum which have successfully extended the range of vocational and A-level courses. The planning for the future indicates firm intentions to further extend the options available and to provide a coherent curriculum for students in the sixth form.

37. The very good links with a local college and other schools in a post-16 collaboration are a strength of the school and provide a much broader curriculum than the school alone could offer. Vocational courses, such as leisure and tourism, which are currently running in Years 10 and 11, will act as a springboard into the sixth form. There are, however, still some weaknesses in the curriculum. It does not include provision for religious education for all students, nor is there a coherent PHSE course. It does not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship.
38. The school provides some study-support opportunities through a study skills day. There is a small range of extra-curricular sporting activities for students. All students in Year 12 take part in work experience for two weeks. The school makes good use of links with local businesses to offer a diverse range of opportunities. There is a wide range of extra-curricular and residential visits.
39. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers for the sixth form courses. Accommodation for the sixth form is adequate. Resources within subjects are satisfactory, but the library is inadequately stocked.

Care, guidance and support

Very good procedures to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils are vigorously implemented. The **very effective** pastoral system ensures that appropriate advice and guidance on both academic and personal matters is given to all pupils. The school makes **satisfactory** arrangements to take into account pupils' views, especially through the newly instituted school council which enables pupils to influence decisions that concern them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pastoral care system is strong.
- Careers education and guidance are excellent.
- Induction arrangements for new pupils are very good.

Commentary

40. The school's system of pastoral care, with its carefully organised structure involving form tutors, heads of year and heads of upper and lower school, is very effective in ensuring that pupils are well cared for. Form periods allow staff to get to know pupils well, so that individual problems can be quickly identified. Appropriate action is taken to deal with any issues that arise, with the involvement of parents and external agencies if need be. In addition to the ongoing advice given by subject teachers, a formal review system enables form tutors to discuss progress with pupils and, through discussion, to agree targets for improvement. These may be personal as well as academic. The student reception office provides a friendly, helpful first port of call for simple queries as well as monitoring attendance and punctuality. Noticeboards for each year group help to instil a sense of belonging and an element of competition, which helps to motivate pupils to try hard and to improve their attendance. The school's genuine concern for pupils' wellbeing is seen in the extra support that is provided through a well-attended breakfast club, the availability of the school nurse and a counselling service. Arrangements for health and safety throughout the school are very good, with comprehensive procedures that are rigorously applied. The school does everything it can to minimise the risks inherent in the building. There are satisfactory arrangements for first aid and good arrangements for child protection.
41. Careers education and guidance are very well planned by the experienced and committed head of careers. Pupils are very appreciative of the comprehensive Careers Convention, the exceptionally well-organised work experience programme and the individual advice and information provided for them. Specially arranged events, such as the Year 9 options evening, help pupils and their parents to explore the long-term implications of choices, and

the school's own advice is supplemented by external organisations, such as the Education Business Partnership and the Rotary Club, whose members sponsor presentations and take part in mock interviews to help pupils prepare for their next steps.

42. Parents are particularly impressed with the arrangements made to help pupils make the transition from primary to secondary school. Visits to the feeder primary schools from Westhoughton are made by the head of Year 7, the special needs co-ordinator and special needs support staff, so that not only is relevant information about the needs of pupils exchanged, but the pupils themselves make their first contacts with those who will be working closely with them in the future. Year 6 pupils enjoy taster days in the secondary school and meet their allocated 'buddies', a group of carefully vetted and trained Year 11 pupils who look after new arrivals until they are settled and often form lasting relationships with them. A special parents' evening is held in October each year, where staff and parents can check that all has gone smoothly and can discuss any issues that may have arisen.

Sixth form

Arrangements for students in the sixth form to review their own progress are very detailed and helpful. Students themselves take part in termly discussions with their tutors to identify areas of strength and weakness and to agree targets designed to help them achieve their full potential. Information about options beyond the sixth form is readily available and staff make sure that advice is impartial and in the best interests of each individual student.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents, who are pleased with most of the things it does. Links with the local community are **very good** and contribute well to pupils' personal and social development. Educational support programmes for adults are **very effective**, as are the **very good** links that are enjoyed with other schools and colleges. Students have **very positive** views about the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong links with industry, commerce and the local community extend and enhance pupils' personal development.
- Very good educational programmes for adults enhance the school's image within the local community and bring practical benefits for pupils.
- Very good links with other schools and colleges extend the curriculum and encourage positive attitudes to learning.
- Positive links with parents support pupils' learning.

Commentary

43. The school enjoys extensive links with local organisations that enrich the taught curriculum. Very strong links with local businesses support the careers education programme by providing work experience placements, mock interviews and advisers for the Young Enterprise scheme, as well as providing mentors for pupils whose motivation needs a boost. Pupils' moral and social development are enhanced through the activities of the Youth Drop-In project, which gives access to environmental work, alternative sports, and fund-raising for a variety of causes world wide. Similar opportunities for personal development are available through the work of a local Christian group, which provides varied activities before and after school. Pupils make their own contributions to the local community by providing Christmas hampers and entertainment for elderly people and collecting for local charities. Both the school and its partners in industry, commerce and the community show a high level of commitment to working together with very fruitful outcomes in terms of pupils' personal development.

44. In accordance with its aim of developing strong links with the local community and responding to its needs, the school has established a very successful adult and community learning project. Courses in basic skills and ICT, some of them offering accreditation, have been very well received by local people. Practical benefits for the pupils have included access to resources, such as specialised software, and the project has also helped parents better to understand what pupils are learning, for example, through a course on how to support pupils taking GCSE French and a fun day building robots, when pupils and adults worked together. The courses provided have fulfilled an identified need in the local community and there is clear potential for closer collaboration and further development of this well-organised, worthwhile project.
45. The Bolton West Federation is a highly successful collaboration between two schools, a training provider and a college of further education. It is an extremely well-managed system, whose members are dedicated to extending and improving educational provision for young people in the area. Because the group can offer a broader curriculum than would be available in a single school, young people can choose courses that are appropriate to their needs and are encouraged to continue with their education beyond the age of 16. In addition, the Federation offers some vocational options which are more appropriate for some pupils than traditional academic courses, so that those who attend college in Years 10 and 11 attain good standards and show improved attitudes to learning.
46. Parents support pupils' learning through their attendance at parents' evenings and, where appropriate, reviews for pupils with special educational needs. They co-operate well with the pastoral staff and give practical help to the school through assisting on school trips, coaching sports teams and supporting the fund-raising efforts of the Parents', Teachers' and Friends' Association. The school is aware that letters sent home with pupils do not always reach parents, so is making increased use of the postal service and, where appropriate, the telephone, to contact parents directly.

Sixth form

47. Sixth form students enjoy school. They feel that they were well informed about the options available to them before they made their decision to stay at school and found that the courses offered were appropriate to their needs and wishes. Relationships with their teachers are good and they appreciate being treated as mature, responsible young people. The sixth form is a community in its own right, where everyone is friendly and supportive. Students feel that staff listen to their views and take account of them. This is confirmed by the improved study area and increased access to computers that is being provided for them, as a result of representations made by the student council.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the school are **good**. The headteacher is providing very clear and effective leadership. He is supported well by the senior management team and by middle managers. Governors carry out their roles well but statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and of general religious education in the sixth form are not met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's determined and thoughtful leadership is taking the school forwards rapidly.
- Senior managers and almost all middle managers are responding well to the new regime and playing their part in the school's improvement.
- Very good assessment procedures have been introduced, but are not yet fully adopted by all departments.
- Financial planning, management and control are very good.

- Governance is good.

Commentary

48. The headteacher has been in the school since September 2002. He very quickly decided what needed to be done to take the school forward and has successfully implemented a well-integrated development programme. This includes curriculum reform, restructuring the school day, addressing pupils' behaviour and developing strong teaching and learning strategies. The rationale for this very comprehensive strategy has been explained very effectively and is being strongly supported by the senior leadership team and the great majority of the other staff. Consequently, it is already having a marked effect on the quality of education in the school, but has not yet worked through to showing improved results at GCSE.
49. The senior leadership team have a strong sense of purpose and a wide range of complementary skills. They work well together, providing a good level of challenge and support for the new ideas. At the moment, there is only one deputy headteacher. The school has tried to make an appointment, but as yet, has not been successful. The absence of this senior post is placing an increased burden on the leadership team, and particularly the headteacher, at a time when as much support as possible is needed.
50. Most subjects are led and managed very effectively, particularly English, design and technology, geography, history, ICT and modern foreign languages. In all of these subjects, pupils' achievement is lifted by well-planned programmes of work and a concerted drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In art and in physical education there are weaknesses in leadership and management and, as a result, pupils do not do as well as they should. The new leadership in mathematics has not yet had time to bring about the improvements that are necessary in the subject.
51. The school has collected a wide range of assessment information for some time, but this has not been used effectively enough to measure the progress that individual pupils make. Strong systems are now in place to do this, but have not yet been put fully in place by all departments.
52. Management systems in the school work well. Financial management is very strong, with very effective use being made of ICT to model spending options and to monitor and control expenditure. Spending decisions have been made prudently, taking careful regard of alternatives, and have led to direct improvements in the quality of education provided by the school. Particular examples include considerable refurbishment of areas of the school and improved ICT provision.
53. Governors are thoroughly committed to the school and have a clear vision of its strengths and weaknesses. They understand the headteacher's analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses and his strategy for improvement. All statutory requirements are met, apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship and of religious education in the sixth form.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3790800	Balance from previous year	88882
Total expenditure	3700147	Balance carried forward to the next	179535*
Expenditure per pupil	3251		

*£118102 of this balance was committed to refurbishment projects planned for 2003.

Sixth form

Leadership and management are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good review and evaluation of the sixth form provision meets the needs of the students.
- Federation links are managed very well.
- The use of data to track students' progress is not as good as it should be.

Commentary

54. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The recently appointed head of the sixth form has a clear vision for its further development. He is evaluating the curriculum thoroughly in order to eliminate the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and to provide a curriculum better suited to the needs of all students. Some good progress has already been made in this, although there is still much to be done. In planning the improvement of the sixth form provision, the head of sixth form has sought and taken appropriate account of the views of the students.
55. The school has, through its collaboration in a federation with the local college, a training provider and another high school, provided a very positive climate for learning for students in Years 12 and 13. The links between the college and the school are managed very well. They benefit the students by providing a wider range of courses than the school alone could provide.
56. The performance and attendance of students are monitored by the head of the sixth form. Although the data available on students' progress and achievement is used to track progress, its use is in its early stages, and is not as thorough as it ought to be.
57. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus to teach religious education in the sixth form are not met.

WESTHOUGHTON VISION SUPPORT BASE

Overall, the quality of provision in the Visual Support Base is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are well supported and have equal access to the curriculum.
- Support staff are well qualified and experienced to ensure that students are included in all mainstream opportunities.
- There is good quality specialist teaching and technology to support students' learning.
- Leadership and management of the support base are strong, resulting in a good team approach to supporting students with varying degrees of visual impairment.
- At present there are insufficient formal links with the mainstream special educational needs department.

Commentary

58. The Vision Support Base successfully fulfils its aims to provide a stimulating and supportive environment for visually impaired students. At present, there are seven students, with varying degrees of disability, who access this purpose-built facility and its provision. The recently reorganised base contains a good range of resources and specialist equipment to support students' learning. Resources are very well managed but unfortunately Braille can be bulky

and the space to store reading resources is at a premium. Good quality support for students, both within the base and in mainstream classes, enables them to develop appropriate independence skills to ensure that they make good progress. Good promotion of inclusion, both educationally and socially, enables students to make a valuable contribution to school life, where they are well accepted.

59. Most mainstream teachers work well with the visually impaired students in their class. In some lessons support is not required and students are totally independent. Good direction and preparation enable appropriate learning to take place under the guidance of the class teacher and support assistant. Students often make better progress than might be expected in relation to their needs. This is due to the high quality of specialist support from well-qualified Vision Support Base staff. Most class teachers are also sensitive to the particular needs of visually impaired students as a result of having received appropriate guidance from the teacher in charge of the base. They encourage independent thinking and involvement in class discussions. Liaison between support staff and class teachers is generally very good, enabling appropriate resources to be prepared beforehand. Learning materials are constantly being adapted and specialist equipment is readily available to support learning.
60. The teacher in charge of the Vision Support Base provides good leadership and management. She has a clear vision of what should be provided for visually impaired students, not least of which is to give them the independence to cope in a sighted world. Students are effectively assessed along with their mainstream peers. However, they are also well monitored within the support base and their progress is regularly reviewed and documented. The school has recognised that more formal systems need to be in place to ensure that the base and the staff within it are regarded as an integral part of the school's special educational needs provision.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and, as a result, achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is very good.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average.
- Pupils' attitudes are, in the main, positive, but a minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 appear disaffected and their learning suffers accordingly.

Commentary

61. In national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the percentage of pupils achieving levels 5 and 6 and above was well above the national average. The results were even better than those of the previous year. Boys and girls performed well above their respective national averages.
62. Results in English language in the GCSE examination in 2003 were slightly below the national average. In English literature performance was, unusually, well below average, with boys doing particularly poorly. These results were in line with the disappointing overall pattern for the year group and were in marked contrast to those of 2002 which were above average.
63. The general standard of speaking and listening at the age of 14 is in line with that found nationally. Pupils listen attentively and work productively in pairs and small groups. They answer questions articulately and respond willingly to rigorous and searching questioning. A group of high attaining girls in Year 9 have done well in public speaking competitions and perform with commitment and intelligence.
64. Pupils are eager to read aloud regardless of their level of attainment. Most read audibly and make meanings clear but a minority of lower attaining pupils lack fluency and clarity. In Years 10 and 11, the standard of oral work is above average and responses become increasingly mature and informative. A drama class in Year 10, for example, were sensitive and supportive in their discussion of personal, stressful experiences.
65. A significant number of pupils join the school with a reading age below their actual age. Such pupils receive intensive specialist support and make rapid progress. The general standard of reading comprehension is in line with the national expectation. Pupils study and enjoy a broad selection of literature. In Years 7 and 8 they are encouraged to read widely for pleasure. Pupils are introduced to the correct use of the library but the current stock of attractive, accessible fiction is too limited to stimulate sufficient interest. By the age of 14 pupils study in detail great works such as *Macbeth* and accurately identify major themes as well as interpreting key characters and their motivation. The good quality of pupils' understanding of their set books is often best seen in the very good written assignments on works such as *The Crucible* and *Jane Eyre*.
66. The standard of pupils' attainment in writing throughout the school is better than that found nationally. Work is carefully presented and, on the whole, neatly written. Pupils write successfully for a range of purposes and audiences and draft their work effectively. By the end of Year 9, high attaining pupils write regularly to National Curriculum levels 6 and 7. The best assignments are carefully planned, and accurate in paragraphing, sentence building,

spelling and punctuation. In Years 10 and 11, media-based work plays an increasingly important role and pupils write effectively to persuade and influence others. Lower attaining pupils write with enjoyment and enthusiasm but their work tends to be too brief and contains errors in sentence structure and the expression of ideas. By the age of 16 many pupils write at a high standard. Their best work is often personal, reflective writing or in response to their study of literature. It is well prepared, skilfully crafted and correct in detail.

67. The overall quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good. In Years 7, 8 and 9 it is never less than satisfactory and is very good or better in half the lessons. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is always at least satisfactory and is good or better in three quarters of the lessons. There is some excellent teaching throughout the school. One class in Year 9, for example, studying *Macbeth* showed very thorough knowledge of the play in their response to two different video versions of the early scenes. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good. Lessons are carefully planned and prepared. Teachers use a wide range of appropriate methods and approaches to stimulate pupils' thinking. Lesson objectives are always clear and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Questioning is often robust and challenging, resulting in lively, enthusiastic responses. Relationships are, in the main, positive and relaxed but a small number of pupils, often boys, are disaffected and poorly motivated. As a consequence, the standard of their achievement suffers. In the best lessons tasks are clear, the pace is brisk, targets are set and kept, a stimulating range of language activities is used and relationships are purposeful. In a drama lesson in Year 10, for example, pupils' intense concentration and above average level of skills sprang directly from inspirational teaching. Marking of pupils' work is consistent and conscientious with much helpful comment and guidance for improvement.
68. The curriculum is broad and balanced with the recent addition of an optional course in media studies. Teaching within the department is regularly and thoroughly monitored. Relationships are very strong with staff sharing the same sense of vision and purpose. There is an overall upward trend in standards and achievement, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. Leadership is very strong and management very effective.
69. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in test results and pupils' achievement at the age of 14. Teaching has also improved and leadership and management are now very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. In other subjects across the curriculum, apart from science and physical education, pupils listen attentively. The quality of speaking varies considerably but, in general, pupils' responses are audible and articulate. In several subjects, however, including mathematics, art and history, opportunities for planned talk are rarely included in lessons. This important element of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for literacy across the curriculum is not yet having its full impact upon classroom practice.
71. Almost all pupils read well enough to understand their textbooks and other printed materials. Only in a minority of departments, however, are pupils being helped by a range of strategies for reading such as annotating, scanning and skimming. Key words are well displayed and used in most subjects. Far too little use is made of the library for research and the extension of knowledge but this is a direct result of the poor quality and provision of books and other resources.
72. The writing of non-fiction was identified as a priority for staff training and this aspect of literacy has received more attention. Practice is still inconsistent, however, and the whole-school marking policy is not always fully implemented. The teacher co-ordinating the development of literacy across the curriculum has worked with energy and commitment. A literacy action group representing several curriculum areas has been created to oversee progress. Of the three main aspects of literacy, speaking and listening is the least well established.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong leadership has created a good climate for learning.
- Very good use is made of ICT.
- There are very good opportunities to enhance learning outside the curriculum.
- The negative attitudes of a minority of pupils adversely affect learning.

Commentary

73. The GCSE results of 2003 were a disappointment, because they represented a sharp decline on the previous year, when both French and German had been among the strongest subjects in the school. Results in both languages were above average in 2002, but in 2003 results in French were below average and in German well below average. This was caused to some extent by unsettled staffing but also by a change of examination syllabus.
74. French and German have equal status and standards are closely parallel. The standards of work seen in the first three years are below average overall, but represent satisfactory achievement, because pupils enter the school with below average learning skills. Higher attaining pupils achieve well and reach average standards by the end of Year 9. Those in the top sets start a second language, French in addition to German or vice versa. Teacher assessments for Year 9 in 2003 show that the percentage of higher attaining pupils reaching the higher grades is similar to the national figure. However, there is also some underachievement. Some pupils display negative attitudes, which prevent their own learning and that of others. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, though satisfactory, is not as good as it could be because class sizes are too large.
75. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils are more focused. Achievement overall is good and standards are average. High attaining pupils continue to achieve well and to aspire to sixth form work in modern languages. Some lower attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily where they have been consistently well taught, but there are also some who underachieve because of irregular attendance or indifferent behaviour.
76. Teaching is satisfactory in the first three years and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have very good language skills, and two are native speakers of French. Lesson planning is a strength, because it is securely based in a well thought out scheme of work which reflects current national concerns for literacy, numeracy and citizenship. Teachers are skilled in using state of the art technology, notably the multi-media projector and the interactive whiteboard. Opportunities for pupils to use computers are more limited. Of the lessons seen, half were good or very good, but a number were unsatisfactory because poor behaviour was not adequately controlled.
77. Visionary leadership has created a climate for learning in which motivated learners can flourish. Thought has been given to raising the attainment of boys, so that in some classes, for example in Year 10, they outperform the girls. One outcome is the very good use by teachers of ICT. Links with partner schools in France and Germany as well as trips abroad provide a further impetus to learning. Day-to-day management is very good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in mathematics and statistics by the age of 16 are below the national averages.
- Pupils are not achieving as well as they should in mathematics and statistics by the age of 16.
- The department has faced extraordinary staffing problems, which have adversely impacted on the quality of its provision.
- Leadership and management have been unsatisfactory.
- A new team has been in place for less than one term.

Commentary

78. Standards attained by Year 11 pupils in the 2003 GCSE examination were below the national average. This represents a significant fall from the results gained in 2002. Furthermore, out of an entry of 202 pupils, only two attained the highest A* grade. More than ten per cent of pupils were ungraded. The figures for statistics are worse. Only two pupils attained an A*, A or B grade. Over ten per cent were ungraded.
79. Standards of work seen in the current Year 10 and Year 11 are unsatisfactory. Pupils are not taking enough care with their work. Presentation is unsatisfactory and too much work is unfinished and not corrected. Teachers' expectations are not high enough.
80. Pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Achievement from entry into the school to the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. The pupils who took the GCSE in 2003 had performed well at the age of 14 but their GCSE results were disappointing. Lesson observations and examination of pupils' work show that pupils in the current Year 10 and Year 11 are also underachieving. Pupils do not enjoy the subject and they do not come to lessons expecting to work hard.
81. The department does not have clear enough plans and strategies for raising standards and improving the quality of education. There are important shortcomings in teaching, including the consistent management of behaviour, expectations and assessment, including marking. Pupils' use of ICT is unsatisfactory.
82. Crucially, at the start of this academic year the department was staffed with eight new teachers (of a total of 11), including the head of department. A teacher who will have the post of second in mathematics takes up post in January. There is no one in the school responsible for provision in numeracy across the curriculum.
83. Poor progress has been made since the last inspection. Progress made by pupils is no longer good. Attitudes towards the subject are no longer positive. The quality of teaching is no longer a strength.
84. There is much to be done to halt and reverse the downward trend in standards and achievement by pupils at the end of Year 11. However, the school has taken urgent action to address this and the 'new' department is working as a team and is committed to raising standards. The corner has been turned and pupils' attitudes have improved since September.

Mathematics across the curriculum

Standards of numeracy across the school are satisfactory.

There are some good examples where it is used in different subjects. In science pupils collect and analyse data. In geography and history they interpret population graphs. In ICT they use spreadsheets, although they do not interpret formulae easily.

There is no co-ordination of the teaching of numeracy in subjects. Consequently, the teaching of numeracy is unplanned and uncoordinated.

SCIENCE

The overall provision for science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good assessment, monitoring and target setting.
- Staff involved in curriculum development.
- Unsettled staffing in the last two years.
- Underachievement by some pupils at 16.

Commentary

85. By the end of Year 9 in 2002 results were close to the national average, but lower than those in mathematics and English. In 2003 the results improved but were lower than those in English and similar to those in mathematics. When taking into account the slightly lower than average results for science on entry, results are satisfactory. Results for boys were slightly higher than those for girls and test results are slightly below teacher assessments. Standards have improved in line with the national average since the last inspection.
86. By age 16, results in 2002 for the double award GCSE science examination were above those nationally but for the single award, results were below. When combined the results were below national results. Girls' results were better than boys' results. In 2003 the results overall were below national expectations and boys and girls performed similarly in the double award examination. The performance of many pupils in science was below that being achieved in other subjects. This is partly explained by the unsettled staffing situation in the past two years and by pupils not completing coursework or attending examinations. Results in 2003 were higher than those in mathematics but significantly lower than those for English. A new course which started in September 2003 is expected to provide a curriculum that more fully meets the needs of pupils.
87. The achievement of pupils in lessons and work produced is satisfactory by Year 9 and Year 11. This is due to good progress in implementing national strategies for science throughout the school, closer monitoring of teaching and improvements to assessment. Pupils are aware of what they are expected to learn in every lesson, and know how well they are doing and what they should do to improve. The 11-14 curriculum is now a modified version of the national model and a new course, *Science for the Twenty First Century*, has started in Year 10 for all pupils. This will, in future, allow some groups to follow a more vocational route. Unsettled staffing in science has limited the achievement of some pupils. Pupils in higher sets in Year 10 and 11 benefit from having specialist teachers who are also teaching post 16. Children with special educational needs are integrated well into lessons and do well. The achievement of some classes has been hindered by the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils. Pupils benefit from following practically-based courses and they are usually taught through an investigative approach. There is some evidence to suggest that the new pilot curriculum in Year 10 does not contain sufficient practical activities and that the pilot

textbooks are mainly aimed at higher achieving pupils. This new course does, however, contain a significant amount of material that is delivered by new technology, which many pupils respond to well.

88. Teaching varies from good to unsatisfactory. Overall it is satisfactory in Years 11 to 14 and good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well prepared and learning outcomes are matched well to the abilities of the pupils. They are usually delivered at an appropriate pace and include a variety of activities to stimulate learning. The best lessons involved challenging ideas. For example, a Year 10 lesson on the origin of the Earth's crust involved modelling the Earth's magnetic field, and a Year 8 lesson on aerobic respiration combined a range of concepts. Some Year 9 classes are benefiting from additional support as part of the national science strategy. Pupils respond well to conducting their own researches, as seen in a lesson on rock formation. Some lessons would benefit from the greater use of visual media, particularly if the lesson does not include practical activities. Pupils are generally good at discussion exercises in small groups and in the class as a whole. The use of new technologies for teaching is beginning to have an impact on learning. Teachers support each other and work well as a team. There are regular sessions in which teachers share ideas on teaching and new staff are making a good contribution. All laboratories have attractive displays but over half require refurbishment to bring them up to modern standards. The layout of benches does not always suit the activity, such as discussion. Some classes leave laboratories untidy and the exit of classes from rooms is sometimes uncontrolled. Most pupils work safely and co-operatively with others.

The leadership and management of the department are good. The effect of the unsettled staffing situation in recent years has been a major challenge for the co-ordination of teaching. Only three teachers were in the department at the time of the previous inspection in 1998. There has been good progress in developing teamwork and there are growing links with scientific organisations and industry. The involvement of the school in the new GCSE pilot course is enhancing links with National Curriculum developers. The department is involved in initial teacher training and has good links with local schools, colleges and university departments. Resources are well managed and there is a programme for refurbishment of the laboratories. Technical support is good.

90. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. There has been some refurbishment of rooms and a new chemical store has been built. One of the preparation rooms has been reduced in size and is now insufficient for the storage and preparation of materials necessary for a modern science course. The curriculum has been revised and improved and there is a good range of books to support learning. Data-logging equipment is insufficient and the access of pupils to computer rooms remains an issue. Agreed routines for the management of pupils in the laboratories and in the science blocks need to be agreed and implemented.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The specialist teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are good.
- There is good technical support for the ICT department.
- There is insufficient time allocated to the teaching of ICT.
- Not all pupils in Year 11 receive their statutory entitlement to ICT education.

Commentary

91. From the evidence of work seen during the inspection, the standard of pupils' work in ICT at the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. This shows good improvement since the last inspection. Attainment at GCSE has also improved since the last inspection and over the last three years there has been a year-on-year increase in the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C, which is now close to the national average.
92. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 is below the national average but by the end of Year 9 pupils have reached a standard in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement, particularly when one bears in mind the inadequate time allocation that has been given to ICT throughout Key Stage 3. This judgement is reinforced by the good progress made by pupils in the majority of lessons observed. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory with pupils being able to maintain a standard in line with national expectations. However, the very restricted time allocation for the recently introduced applied ICT course, just two periods per week for a double award GCSE qualification, poses a serious threat to this standard being maintained.
93. Teaching and learning at both key stages are consistently good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and a number of very good lessons occurred in both key stages. Teaching is very good where learning objectives are explained to the pupils at the start of the lesson; explanations are clear and the lesson contains a variety of interesting stimuli. For example, very good use was made of an interactive whiteboard to allow pupils to participate in a whole-class revision quiz. This resulted in all pupils thinking carefully about each question so that learning was strongly consolidated. Lessons generally take place in new and well-equipped classrooms with class sizes being small enough to enable each pupil to work at a computer without having to share. This allows the higher attaining pupils to work at a fast pace without having to wait for others. Some lessons take place in poor conditions, however, such as the classroom used as a 'corridor' for an adjoining classroom. This arrangement inevitably causes disruption and breaks the flow of the lesson.
94. Pupils generally like ICT and are well motivated in lessons, especially when allowed to use the computers for well-planned practical work. The only pupils who appeared unmotivated were lower attaining pupils who followed the double award GCSE applied ICT course. These pupils would benefit from a less demanding alternative course.
95. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The director of ICT has a very clear vision for the future of ICT in this school. The head of ICT plays an equally important role in dealing with the day-to-day running of the department. Both work hard and demonstrate strong dedication to bringing about continuous improvement. They set a very good example to the rest of the department. Schemes of work are in place, a good handbook has been written and there is an impressive development plan. The assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress are also good with all teachers being provided with detailed and regularly updated data on the pupils they teach. Pupils are generally aware of their academic targets in ICT and have an accurate knowledge of their current level of performance in terms of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. Work in ICT has good technical support with a full-time ICT technician and a network manager.
96. Fresh innovations occur regularly. In this academic year, for example, important changes have been made in Year 10. ICT is now a compulsory subject for all Year 10 pupils with the majority taking the applied ICT course which is supported by a comprehensive range of on-line learning resource materials. Higher attaining pupils are also offered the option of choosing a more demanding course. These new arrangements mean that all pupils will, from now on, receive their full ICT entitlement in Key Stage 4. At present the majority of Year 11 pupils are not receiving sufficient ICT to meet statutory requirements because many have not chosen ICT as one of their GCSE subjects.

97. The department also offers pupils a number of extra-curricular opportunities such as the Robotics club and the word processing/Microsoft Office specialist courses. It also makes a significant contribution to the school's community education programme by offering ICT courses to adult learners.
98. There has been good improvement in the provision in ICT since the last inspection. Standards have improved at both key stages, technical support is now much better and very significant improvements have recently taken place in accommodation and resources. The department now boasts three new purpose-built and well-equipped ICT suites that provide an excellent teaching and learning environment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

99. Most pupils show a satisfactory level of competence in the way they use ICT to support their work in other subjects, for example, in their desktop publishing skills and their ability to research topics using the Internet. Pupils also benefit from the very good use of ICT to improve learning in history, foreign languages and design and technology lessons. In these subjects, interactive whiteboards are often used to help pupils understand difficult concepts and consolidate learning.
100. All teachers have recently been provided with their own laptop computer with access to the Internet. This has increased teachers' use of ICT in the planning and delivery of lessons. However, due to the recent increase in the amount of ICT being taught as a discrete subject there is reduced availability of the computer suites to be booked by individual teachers for whole-class ICT experience. The school has invested in a 'Classroom in a Box' initiative where 16 laptop computers are housed in a mobile unit that can be moved to any classroom and used as if they were normal, wired network stations. Ideally an additional computer suite is needed to satisfy the healthy level of demand from departments but in the short term the 'Classroom in the Box' system provides a satisfactory solution.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good, and sometimes very good; it leads to good achievement.
- Most pupils show interest and enthusiasm in lessons and make good progress.
- The department is very well led and managed.
 - Teachers make excellent use of ICT in their teaching.
- Pupils do not use ICT sufficiently for research and the presentation of work.
- A small minority of pupils do not achieve well enough because of their poor attitudes to work.

Commentary

101. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is broadly average. In 2003 teachers assessed pupils' work in Year 9 as above average overall. The standard of work seen during the inspection was average, but a small proportion of pupils reach very high standards. Most pupils achieve well and make good progress from their standards in Year 7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because the work set is appropriate for them. The work set for high attainers is suitably challenging.
102. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 have good knowledge and understanding of the past. They usually recall well work done in previous lessons so that teachers can quickly move on to new work.

Most see and understand differences between the past and the present. They use well a range of sources to build up a picture of the past. High attainers evaluate the reliability of sources competently. Lower attainers use sources for information, but they often fail to make valid deductions from the information. Pupils understand the reasons for actions taken in the past. The highest attainers in Year 9, for instance, demonstrated good understanding of the reasons for decisions made about the treatment of conscientious objectors during World War I.

103. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 11 is below average. There is a small proportion whose work is well above average. In the 2002 GCSE examination the overall standard was well above average. The 2003 results were below average. This difference was because in 2002 there was a large number of very high attaining pupils. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily.
104. The standard of work from pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 is a little below average. There is a small proportion above average. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have sound knowledge of the topics they study and understand well why events happened. Lower attainers' knowledge is, however, often patchy. The highest attainers write well at length, and successfully evaluate the reliability and usefulness of sources.
105. The vast majority of pupils respond positively to good teaching, and work hard and achieve well. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to work are usually good. This is a major reason for their good achievement. A minority do not achieve as well as they should, because they ignore their teachers' frequent reminders about working rather than chattering.
106. The quality of teaching is good overall and occasionally very good. Teachers are very confident in their subject. They manage pupils very well and set high expectations of behaviour and hard work. Teachers usually use a range of short, motivating activities which interest pupils and keep them busy and involved. Lessons proceed at a good pace and pupils are actively involved in their learning. Teachers use resources such as music and videos well. They make excellent use of ICT in their teaching for presentations and to provide stimulating visual and text images.
107. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The department is staffed by a hard-working team, all of whom are subject specialists. They have embraced new technology very willingly and to good effect. The work of the department is largely well monitored, although the head of department does not have sufficient time to monitor teaching frequently enough. Because there are no computers in the department for pupils' use, not enough use is made of ICT by pupils, either for research or for the presentation of their work.

Geography

The provision for geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Leadership and management are very effective.
- Attainment at GCSE is rising.

Commentary

108. Standards attained, indicated by teacher assessment at the end of Year 9, are above average. Although girls' attainment is higher than boys', the gap is not as wide as it is nationally and the boys' attainment is further above the national average for boys. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is below average. Achievement is good and the pupils make good

progress. Teacher assessment is reliable as standards of work seen during the inspection confirm.

109. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were well below the national average, and well below the results of the previous year. Girls' and boys' attainment was equally low. Teaching and learning were interrupted by changes of staff during the year, adversely affecting pupils' attainment and achievement. . Although the course was very popular, with 150 pupils studying geography, it was not best suited to all, especially those of lower ability. In 2002 attainment was slightly above average. However, it was below average in terms of grades A*-G, with a higher proportion than average failing to achieve a grade. The lowest attaining pupils were mainly boys. During the inspection the pupils' attainment was in line with national expectations for pupils in Year 11. For pupils in Year 10 attainment was above expectations, the differences coming about from a change to the curriculum that offers pupils vocational options. Although this has led to a reduction in the number of pupils who study geography, the pupils taking the subject are more motivated and want to study the subject.
110. Overall, teaching is good. Much of it is very good. The teachers engage pupils' interest. Lessons are well planned, stimulating and offer good challenge, using appropriately differentiated teacher-prepared resources. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and of the assessment and examination system and explain them well to pupils. They use their knowledge of the local area and region, as appropriate, to provide exemplification of the processes being studied. Where teaching is excellent, best use is made of ICT facilities to enhance teacher exposition and exemplification and thereby ensure further engagement and interest in the subject.
111. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a very clear vision of how to improve and this is shared with all members of the department. There is clear strategic thinking and planning. Management is unbureaucratic and flexible, but effective. Departmental meetings are supported by regular informal contact to discuss progress. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored and evaluated, at least once per term, and this is in addition to performance management. Although accommodation has recently been refurbished and the walls of geography classrooms have good relevant displays to support and encourage learning, there are only three classrooms and lessons are often in rooms decorated with materials to support learning in other subjects. These classrooms are sometimes too small for the number of pupils. Textbook resources are supportive and appropriate. These are well enhanced by differentiated resources prepared by the teachers. Library resources for geography are inadequate to support independent work outside the classroom. There is a lack of ICT resources in geography classrooms and ICT suites cannot be booked for lessons often enough.
112. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment is more developed and teacher assessment is now reliable.

To bring about further improvement the department should

- continue the drive to raise standards;
- continue the drive to improve assessment by linking level and grade descriptors to learning targets.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education for pupils in the main school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good and in Years 10 and 11 very good.
- The head of department not only shows high aspirations but also offers an excellent role model to other staff and pupils.
- Procedures for assessment, for tracking pupils and for monitoring teachers' performance are all areas for further development.
- The school now meets statutory requirements for pupils in the main school

Commentary

113. The standard of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 is in line with the national expectation. Pupils have a sound grasp of the distinctive beliefs and practices of Christianity and of the other religions they study. They address issues that arise from their study and use them to explore their own beliefs and values. They give their own point of view supported by reasons. They use specialist vocabulary correctly.
114. The standard of pupils' work at the end of Year 11 is below average. In a lesson seen, pupils considered euthanasia and recognised the tensions between the arguments for and against the practice. They showed appreciation of what is meant by the sanctity of life. Their work shows that they are at the expected GCSE standard and that attainment is rising.
115. In Years 10 and 11 pupils follow the GCSE short course. The first entry was in 2002 and results were well below the national average. In 2003 results were lower than in 2002 but this reflected a dip across the school as a whole. Boys' results were well below girls', as is the case nationally.
116. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. In Year 7, when learning about Abraham, many pupils make excellent progress. In Year 8, when pupils learn about the Bible and its importance to Christians, most teaching is by non-specialists and achievement is more variable. Most pupils, however, continue to make good progress. In Year 9 achievement is mostly good but again, due to non-specialist teaching, is variable. In a lesson seen, pupils distinguished between religious and secular images associated with Christmas. Their achievement, however, was unsatisfactory because they did not learn enough about what Advent and Christmas mean to Christians.
117. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 has improved very significantly since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils benefit greatly from the GCSE course with its study of personal and social issues in relation to Christianity and another religion. They learn how marriage and family life have changed over recent years. Through their study of abortion and euthanasia they grasp how religious beliefs and values affect people's attitudes and behaviour.
118. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection throughout the school. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are good. The specialist teaching is outstanding. The specialist teachers show and share authority and confidence in their lessons. They engender in pupils very positive attitudes and pupils respond with a very high standard of behaviour. Planning of lessons is excellent and pupils' progress in learning is very good. Many pupils, however, do not have the benefit of specialist teaching and the quality of what they receive is more varied. In the lessons teaching and learning range from very good to unsatisfactory. Some pupils have the better non-specialist teaching and learn well. Others receive teaching that is not good enough. Weaknesses include a lack of intellectual challenge so that pupils develop negative attitudes and misbehave. As a result, learning in lessons is unsatisfactory.

119. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils receive outstanding specialist teaching. Teachers have very good knowledge of religion and a clear grasp of the purpose of religious education. They know the precise requirements of the GCSE examination and plan their lessons accordingly. They share learning objectives with pupils and use teaching strategies that engage pupils' interest and attention. As in Years 7 to 9, pupils respond to such specialist teaching with very positive attitudes and the highest standards of behaviour. As a result, pupils acquire knowledge, deepen their understanding and develop the skills necessary for success in the examination.
120. Assessment is unsatisfactory. The department has not yet fully adopted the scale of attainment from the agreed syllabus. Teachers make insufficient use of the level descriptors. Pupils are not aware of what level they are at or of what they need to do to reach the next level. Better use of levels would make reports more informative to parents. More systematic procedures for end of unit and end of year assessment would also enable the department to monitor and analyse its performance better.
121. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum has improved enormously since the last inspection and is now very good. The school's match of teachers to the curriculum, however, is no better than satisfactory. Accommodation is good but the shortage of textbooks results in too much dependence on photocopied worksheets.
122. Leadership within the department is very good. The head of department not only offers an excellent role model but has also created a very effective core team. The clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations are excellent. Management is satisfactory but procedures for assessment, for tracking pupils and for monitoring teachers' performance are all areas for further development.
123. The greatest improvement since the last inspection has been for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The school has achieved this improvement through the appointment of specialist teachers. In ten of the 25 classes in Years 7 to 9, however, pupils receive non-specialist teaching. That some of this teaching is unsatisfactory indicates the importance, for continued success, of the right staffing to meet the needs of the curriculum. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching overall is good and results in good learning.
- Leadership is very good and skilful management has brought about very good departmental progress since the last inspection.
- Most pupils have very good attitudes towards the subject, make good efforts with their work and show good progress in skills and knowledge from Years 7 to 11.
- Standards seen in lessons are average, but pupils' performances in tests and examinations are below average when compared with the results of pupils in similar schools.
- The department is under-funded and needs more equipment for ICT, control technology and consumable materials.
- Technician support is minimal and teachers have to spend too much time on mundane tasks.

Commentary

124. The proportion of pupils gaining levels 5 and above in the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was below the national average but results were slightly higher than in 2002.
125. GCSE results overall in 2003 were below the national average for grades A*-C, but most pupils gained at least a G grade. Results in the material areas differ. Textiles results were above average, but in graphic products, food and in resistant materials, results were below average. Girls tended to outperform the boys in all material areas. Overall results were not as good as those in 2002.
126. By the end of Year 9, pupils cope well with designing and making things because they use the knowledge and skills gained on short practical projects in Years 7 and 8. This shows good achievement, as pupils enter school knowing little about the subject. Most pupils handle tools and materials confidently and show accuracy when coping with, for example, measuring, marking, cutting and manipulating. The highest attaining pupils keep their files and booklets neatly, and many of them use ICT for writing up their work, using technical language and searching the Internet. A few boys and some of the lower attaining pupils do not produce enough written work, nor do they always complete homework tasks, thus creating difficulties for themselves when they need to move on. The higher attaining pupils are more likely to question the teachers about processes, and have plenty of theory work in folders, to help them sort out ideas and gain above average grades. Most pupils do well in practical work as they are guided carefully through each project. The lower attaining pupils benefit from close supervision in theory to help them cope with problems of reading, writing and number work.
127. By the end of Year 11, pupils' practical skills are good in their chosen material area. They are familiar with using a wide range of materials and tools, including computer-aided equipment such as CAD-CAM and sewing machines. This demonstrates good achievement, as GCSE courses are more demanding of pupils' time and individual effort. Pupils have to become accustomed to thinking for themselves and setting themselves realistic targets. They tackle projects sensibly and most of them work hard, often staying after school to do extra work in the homework club. Some pupils are inventive and devise dishes, and make samples and small working models before committing themselves to final pieces. Whereas most pupils perform well with practical work, many, except the higher attaining pupils, do not do themselves justice in theory. In general, imaginative drawing skills are weak and pupils have difficulty in translating drawings into working diagrams. Some pupils, mainly the lower attaining boys, do not do enough work in their portfolios; they show poorly arranged and untidy pages and ill-considered evaluations. Where theory work is best, pupils use ICT to enhance presentations, to research, and to introduce strong colours, and they demonstrate good word-processing skills, analyse recipes, collate results of surveys and create interesting drawings.
128. The quality of teaching overall is good and secures good learning. Planning is strong. The schemes of work are designed to interest and motivate the pupils and give them opportunities to build up skills in both designing and making. Most teachers give up free time to allow pupils access to the work areas after school hours. This is invaluable for pupils who want to do extra work and particularly for those in Year 11 who need the time to perfect their major projects. Teachers are good practitioners. Pupils enjoy watching demonstrations as they gain confidence in discovering what they can do, with perseverance and practice. Relationships are secure and pupils appear to enjoy technology. They are encouraged to participate so respond positively, and most of them settle to work cheerfully and try hard. Teachers know the pupils well and work closely with individuals to ensure that they achieve their potential. Pupils receive honest feedback on their work, but some teachers mark work more thoroughly than others.

129. Leadership is very good. The new head of department is a skilful manager with good plans for the success of the department. The development plan is realistic and addresses the need to improve the teaching of theory, increase the amount of ICT and control technology, and improve the level of resources. The teachers work well as a team. They plan together to ensure equal challenge in the work and have created a portfolio of assessed work especially to help new teachers see what is achievable in different materials and from pupils of all ages and abilities.
130. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is better, pupils make faster progress, homework has been strengthened and the rewritten scheme of work, the after-school clubs and the clearer coursework deadlines have all helped to raise pupils' interests and standards. In order to improve the quality of portfolios, finished items and speed up production, the department needs more computer workstations, a large-sheet colour printer, more funds for consumables and increased technician time.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are positive.
 - Pupils study and gain inspiration from a wide range of famous artists.
- Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is not based on National Curriculum criteria.
- Drawing skills are not developed systematically.
- Leadership of the department lacks clear vision.
- Use of sketchbooks is poor, particularly in Years 7, 8, and 9.
- The percentage of pupils gaining the top GCSE grades is falling, especially among boys.

Commentary

131. Teacher assessment of Year 9 pupils in 2003 indicated that the percentage achieving level 5 was well above the national average. However, the teacher assessments were not based on National Curriculum criteria and were inaccurate. In general, standards of work in Year 9 during the inspection were below the national average.
132. The percentage of pupils gaining an A*-C grade in 2000 was in line with the national average. Since then the figure has fallen and was significantly below the national average in 2003. However, all pupils achieved an A*-G grade, which was an improvement on previous years. In general, boys do not perform as well as girls and in 2003 the gap in performance was significantly greater than that found nationally. Pupils do not do as well in art as they do in other subjects
133. Standards of work in Year 11 are generally below the national average. Pupils are able to carry out in-depth research into the work of other artists and incorporate new ideas into their own work, much of which shows high levels of individuality. Colour is used well in finished work but poor standards of drawing adversely affect the quality of finished work. Pupils' ability to discuss and evaluate their work is hampered by a poor art vocabulary. Knowledge and understanding of the basic elements of art are not developed to a satisfactory level.
134. The achievement of all pupils is satisfactory both within lessons and from year to year. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. This is due to teachers being well informed about the specific needs of pupils and giving effective individual support throughout lessons.

135. Overall the standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory. However, some unsatisfactory teaching was observed in both key stages. This was due to insufficient emphasis on the development of visual ideas and preparatory work prior to embarking on final pieces. These lessons also lacked the specific teaching of artistic skills and technique. Most pupils do not use sketchbooks and this limits opportunities to develop personal ideas, experiment and develop technique. However, the vast majority of teaching seen were either satisfactory or good. These lessons contained a good balance of whole-class instruction and individual support, with a clear focus on the development of artistic skill.
136. In some lessons pupils benefit from regular feedback on their work and weekly targets motivate pupils to work harder and to complete tasks. Pupils generally respond well to the teaching and clearly enjoy the subject. High standards of behaviour are expected and incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with effectively. All teachers have a good rapport with pupils and there is a positive working atmosphere in most lessons.
137. Teacher assessment carried out in Year 9 was not based on National Curriculum criteria and was unreliable. For example, the school's figures for the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 and above in 2003 were well above the national average. These assessments did not reflect standards seen which were generally below the national average.
138. Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory. The department is not guided by a clear vision and agreed principles, and as a result teachers tend to work independently. Teachers' views relating to the development of the department are not sought. Management of the department is barely satisfactory. Schemes of work ensure a good balance of two- and three-dimensional work. A departmental development plan is well produced. Progress on a number of targets is being pursued such as increasing the use of ICT and improving assessment procedures. The performance of pupils is not analysed or discussed and therefore is not used to inform curriculum planning.
139. Teachers frequently offer practical help to each other and good teamwork is evident. Attendance on in-service training courses is regular but the monitoring of teaching is not consistently carried out. Mutually beneficial links with Manchester University involving teacher training result in a steady flow of new ideas entering the department. Accommodation is satisfactory but excessively large classes, particularly in the smallest art room, produce oppressive conditions, which hamper creativity. There are opportunities for pupils to work after school. The department organises regular visits to local art galleries.
140. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, and in particular,
- marking of work is still irregular;
 - the percentage of pupils gaining the top GCSE grades has fallen;
 - the standard of teaching in some lessons is now unsatisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **just satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular activities are strong despite the small numbers taking part.
- Work in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- The department has excellent community links.
- Staff are well qualified with strong instrumental skills.
- Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.
- There is not enough opportunity provided in Years 7 to 9 to develop pupils' ICT skills and instrumental skills other than on electronic keyboards.

- Limited target setting and a lack of academic challenge result in pupils making slow progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

141. Pupils do well in Years 10 and 11 though standards of achievement in GCSE examinations were slightly below the national average in 2003. Girls do better than the national norm at GCSE while boys have made unsatisfactory progress. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is good. For example, pupils competently write minuets and fanfares and some are able to use ICT confidently.
142. Though the majority of pupils enter the school with average skills, by the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment is below average. Though composing skills are basic and performance skills are developing well, pupils are unable to appraise the quality of the music they produce. For example, the teachers often appraised pupils' work themselves and Year 9 pupils displayed basic improvisation techniques, below normal attainment for their age. However, most pupils performed keyboard pieces with confidence, reading both staff notation and chord symbols well and using correct fingering techniques.
143. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Though attempts are made to plan structured lessons by adopting principles of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, planning is not always successful. For example, starter activities often relied on group work involving writing activities, in which boys were observed sitting back and not working while girls completed the task. Though teachers often provided practical, they were often not differentiated enough. For example, pupils were observed playing the melody or chords of *Jingle Bells* over a rhythmic accompaniment but the more able were not challenged to play both parts together. Pupils also performed individual parts of a group piece but more able pupils who could play the pieces well were asked to play simple pulse on tambourines while the less able struggled with the keyboard performances.
144. The quality of teaching in Years 10 to 11 was good and lessons were planned with a variety of activities and clear progress was made during lessons. For example, pupils began one lesson with a listening exercise related to 'fanfare'. They then confidently described features using appropriate musical terminology and vocabulary and proceeded to compose and then show their own fanfares using prepared work cards.
145. Extra-curricular work was good, with pupils performing with confidence and skill, though participation in these activities was small. The constant setting up and dismantling of equipment at both key stages adversely affects the flow of lessons and has a detrimental impact on pupils' behaviour and wastes time. This is particularly significant in the second room, which is far too small. However, though practice rooms are available, they were underused, only being used for instrumental lessons and never for class group work. Much emphasis was placed on pupils using electronic keyboards to compose and pupils were given limited opportunities to sing or make use of the tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments available, though these were also in poor condition. Pupils were never encouraged to use their own instruments to compose their ideas.
146. Group work was the main form of teaching and groups were often made up of between four and eight pupils. This meant that groups split into subgroups and work was hampered as a result, and pupils did not work well together.
147. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership and though there are clear department development policies, what is written is not always practised. For example, the plans discuss improving the tuned and un-tuned resources, yet in practice keyboards and related equipment have been developed further at the expense of other resources. It is apparent that some important information is not always passed on to other staff. For example, there is little moderation of pupils' work, and as a result assessment, particularly in

Years 7 to 9, is inaccurate. Schemes of work do not identify what pupils should do or attain in relation to National Curriculum levels. As a result, attainment in Years 7 to 9 remains below average.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE examination have improved.
- Teaching is good.
- Dance is not taught to boys in Years 7 to 9.
- Management of the department is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

148. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were below the national average although they have continually improved over the previous four years. In 2002 they were well above the national average. Teacher assessments in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average.
149. By the end of Year 9 standards vary between the activities taught but overall they are in line with those expected. Standards are well below average in netball and badminton, where pupils in Year 9 are unable to play the game because they lack control and accuracy in basic skills and their knowledge and understanding of the games are weak. They have not achieved well enough in these games over the three years of teaching. Standards are in line with those expected in dance, where pupils link movements together with fluency and control and demonstrate simple choreography skills. They co-operate well to create a group dance. In football, pupils in Year 7 show control when dribbling the ball and know the importance of keeping the ball at their feet when travelling.
150. By the end of Year 11 standards are in line with those expected, except in netball where achievement has not been good enough and standards are below average. Low attaining pupils make good progress and attain well despite below average standards. At GCSE written work is average, where more able pupils show some pride in the presentation of their work. In theory lessons the pupils know the structure of the heart and identify composite parts, such as the aorta, atrium and ventricles. They learn how to calculate cardiac output of blood from the heart. In practical lessons standards are in line with those expected in volleyball and swimming, where pupils' knowledge and understanding are good.
151. Teaching is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. The best lessons are planned well and include clear learning objectives. The improvement of examination results over the past years is because of good subject knowledge of the activities taught. Teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum is not secure enough and is in need of refreshment to ensure coverage of the programme of study being taught. Teachers make efforts to ensure that pupils use the Internet and websites for homework but not all pupils use them effectively. Pupils with special educational needs, including partially sighted pupils, are integrated into lessons and make satisfactory progress. In GCSE classes, the marking of pupils' work is regular but it does not indicate clearly how pupils can improve and what progress they are making. Reports to parents are unsatisfactory as they do not indicate what pupils know, understand or can do, and targets for improvement are not helpful.
152. The department is suffering from some instability in staffing, which is hindering development. Leadership is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. There is no clear curriculum plan and the use of six-week units is not suitable to ensure progress and continuity in some

activities. The amount of time allocated to the subject in the lower school is adequate although there is no opportunity for boys to be taught dance. This has implications for assessment at the end of Year 9. All pupils in Year 11 study the GCSE course but their access to the full range of the National Curriculum is not guaranteed. Only one period per week is allocated to the subject in Year 10. There is no policy on assessment, which is unsatisfactory, and pupils are not clear as to the progress they are making. There is a need to consider the role of non-participant pupils who are too high in number. They need closer supervision as they are often disruptive to the lessons. The attitudes of some pupils have improved but not sufficiently since the previous inspection. Pupils lack concentration and some, in Years 9 and 11 particularly, lack respect for teachers. More able pupils in Year 11 on the GCSE course show a mature attitude to their work. Risk assessment procedures are now in place.

153. Accommodation is adequate and good use is made of the leisure centre facilities. There is no gymnasium and the dance studio is too small to teach the large classes that exist. The department uses the squash courts and the corridor for some lessons and these are unsuitable environments. The changing facilities are unsatisfactory as there is insufficient seating and pupils' clothing is left on the floor.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Leisure and tourism

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subject well and make lessons lively and effective.
- Pupils are given very good individual support.
- Pupils respond well to the course and make good progress.

Commentary

154. Pupils do well in this subject because they are interested in the work and are given very good individual support. As a result, pupils achieve higher results in leisure and tourism than in other subjects that they study at GCSE level and standards in lessons are good.
155. Teachers know the subject and the requirements of the examinations well. They plan their work carefully to ensure that pupils understand what is required of them and develop the appropriate skills and understanding. Lessons are interesting and teachers ensure that there is a pleasant and productive atmosphere in which pupils can ask for help if they need it and talk to each other about the work they are doing.
156. Extended project work is managed well by the teachers. Pupils are encouraged to plan their work carefully and monitor their own progress as the project develops. They respond well to this responsibility. At the same time, teachers assess their work closely in order to provide support when necessary and to make sure that progress is being made.
157. The subject area is led and managed well. Teaching is supported by clear documentation and there are well-established procedures for teaching and assessment in the department which ensure that pupils achieve well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has introduced the National Curriculum in citizenship for all pupils.
- The school has raised teachers' and pupils' awareness of the importance of good citizenship.
- Without a programme of study the school's provision has insufficient coherence and sequence.
- The school has not defined intended learning outcomes or devised ways of measuring whether they are achieved.
- The teacher who takes the lead on citizenship is not only knowledgeable but also strongly committed to the subject's further development.

Commentary

158. It is impossible to judge the standard of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. The school did not make available a representative range of pupils' work nor offer a timetable of citizenship lessons for observation during the inspection. Therefore, no overall judgement about the quality of teaching and learning in citizenship lessons is possible.
159. The school's 'Curriculum Structure' document does not show how the school has included the National Curriculum in citizenship. The departmental handbook for citizenship, however, contains detailed documentation of the process by which the teacher responsible identified the subject through the existing curriculum. In Years 7 to 9 the provision of content occurs through other timetabled lessons, particularly English, history and geography. In Years 10 and 11 relevant content occurs in English, modern foreign languages, ICT and religious education. In design and technology pupils not only cover a range of relevant topics but also develop the skills of enquiry and communication and those of participation and responsible action.
160. The school has raised teachers' and pupils' awareness of the importance of good citizenship. An audit of the curriculum showed that many subjects contribute to the development of pupils as good citizens. Teachers include citizenship as a cross-curricular theme in their lesson plans and relate relevant content to its meaning and importance. The school's commitment is also evident in displays around the school. What the school lacks, however, is a programme of study in citizenship to give the subject coherence and progression. Teachers and pupils need to know how what they are learning fits in with what went before and with what comes later. They also need to know the intended learning outcomes. With these things in place the department could then devise procedures for assessment to enable teachers to measure and report on pupils' progress.
161. Departmental documentation and relevant parts of schemes of work from other subjects show that the school has successfully introduced the National Curriculum arrangements. The diffuse model of delivery adopted by the school is difficult to operate but has the capacity to become very good. The teacher responsible for citizenship is not only knowledgeable but also strongly committed to the subject's further development. Leadership so far has been very good but the next stage of development has stalled because, without a programme of study, citizenship has become too difficult to manage.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, seven 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, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

Level 3 GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	57	96.1	14	48.7	18.6	35.1
Biology	20	80	91.6	15	36.3	28.5	33.2
Business studies	26	92	96.4	8	32.8	31.5	35.4
English literature	25	84	98.5	4	43.7	22.0	38.9
Design and technology	8	100	87.6	0	32.4	27.5	35.4
		100	95.3	0	35.5		
General studies	61	67	78.6	10	25.7	20.5	30.0
Information technology	17	94	91.6	47	37.2	39.4	34.1
History	9	56	91.8	0	37.2	15.6	37.8
Sociology	15	93	95.4	47	29.5	40.0	39.1
Sports studies	11	91	96.1	45	48.7	40.9	33.2

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	71	96.1	57	48.7	71.4	85.1
Biology	10	90	91.6	10	36.3	56.0	74.1
Business studies	21	100	96.4	33.3	32.8	78.1	76.5
English literature	11	100	98.5	27.3	43.7	69.1	84.3
Design and technology	11	100	95.3	0.0	35.5	70.9	76.5
General studies	26	92	90.1	27	29.1	66.4	69.3
Geography	8	100	97.1	37.5	40.5	85.0	80.9
Information technology	5	100	89.1	0.0	22.4	72.0	64.1
Sociology	6	100	95.4	33.3	39.6	83.3	79.1
Sports studies	10	100	95.4	40.0	29.5	84.0	73.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS results in 2003 were significantly better than those in 2002.
- Teaching is very good and sets high academic standards.
- The subject is very well led and managed, and improved standards have led to a marked increase in recruitment and a high rate of retention.
- Although results at A2 level have improved, they are still somewhat below the national average.

Commentary

162. Results in the GCE AS-level in 2003 were significantly better than those in 2002. Students' average points score was above the national figure of recent years. A quarter of candidates achieved the highest grades. A2-level results in 2003 also showed considerable improvement but were still somewhat below the recent national average. There was a marked upward trend in 2003.
163. The standard of current work seen is above average. Students in Year 12, encouraged by very good teaching, have adjusted well to the challenge of the new course. During their study of *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, for example, one group responded well to detailed analysis of the text and discussed articulately and maturely some of the main themes raised in the challenging and complex novel. Another group enjoyed a perceptive and well-informed consideration of the early scenes in *Hamlet*. These high attaining students clearly relished the thorough study of such a great work of literature with all its implications and resonances.
164. Students in Year 12 are well motivated and appreciate the very good teaching they receive. Standards of work in Year 13 are above average and the retention of two large teaching groups reflects the good results at AS-level in 2003. Stimulated by excellent teaching, which set very high academic standards, one class explored Wordsworth's poetry with particular reference to his view of childhood and the 'romantic' vision expressed in *The Prelude*. Encouraged to recollect their own childhood experiences, students engaged in sensitive and well-informed discussion, always related to their study of the poem. The overall quality of oral work was well above average.
165. The standard of students' written work varies considerably but the majority is well planned, relevant and accurate. Some assignments are already of the highest quality, matching the highest A-level grades. The very best writing expresses a clear personal critical response, based upon thorough knowledge of the text, often related to parallel literature and placed in a wider context of literary appreciation. One essay on *Hamlet*, for example, had all those qualities and also possessed an individual sense of style which showed a very mature understanding of the play. Students take accurate and useful notes and put together impressive files. They use a wide range of sources for research and further reading but the school library is inadequate to supply their needs.
166. Teaching is very good overall and the enthusiasm and commitment of students reflect this. High academic standards are expected. An imaginative range of teaching methods is used and the general quality of students' discussion is good. Relationships are very positive, with mutual respect for the ideas and opinions expressed. Students' work is very thoroughly marked with extensive comment and guidance.

167. The number of students opting for the subject in the sixth form has recently increased considerably and the high regard in which the department is held has been a key factor. Leadership and management are very good.

Modern foreign languages

French was the focus subject. One lesson of **German** was sampled in Year 12, in which there are two students. Teaching, learning and achievement are good, and standards are above average. Overall provision for modern languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, and includes an input by two native speakers of French.
- There are good opportunities for experience of work, study and family life in France and Germany.
- ICT is well used.
- Groups are small, especially in Year 12.

Commentary

168. Standards in French at AS and A2 level in 2003 were above average in terms of the top grades. All A2 students got at least a grade E, which is slightly better than the national average. A2 results have been above the national averages for the previous three years. At AS-level, results were slightly below average, though all candidates except one got at least a grade E. Achievement overall is good, as can be seen in Year 12 (not yet in Year 13), from the measures of students' progress used by the school using standardised tests
169. Half the lessons seen during the inspection were very good or excellent. They were conducted entirely in French and gave the students insights into the life experiences of young people in France at this time. In one excellent lesson, personal issues affecting society at large were addressed and differences between the UK and a number of continental countries were explored.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics in the sixth form is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students who take the A-level examination perform well.
- Students do not achieve as well as they should in Year 12.
- The subject is not popular.
- Reviewing performance and taking action are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

170. Numbers taking the A-level examination are low and have been in single figures for the past three years. Numbers were higher in 1999 and 2000. Too few able mathematicians progress into the sixth form. The highest grade of those entering is usually B at GCSE.
171. Too few students progress from AS to A-level. Of the 17 AS students in 2002, only six went on to the A-level. Similarly, of the 14 AS students in 2003, only five have gone on to A-level this year.
172. Students in Year 12 underachieve. In the 2003 AS examination, several of the entrants were ungraded. None attained an A grade. The small number that go on to the A-level invariably

perform well. In 2002 all three A-level entrants passed, as did the six in 2003. Several attained the highest grades A or B. . The current Year 13 are also on course to achieve to their potential.

173. Overall, the leadership and management are satisfactory. However, not enough action is taken to ensure that those students who take the subject up at AS-level have the potential to achieve at least a pass grade, and then go on to do so.

SCIENCE

The focus for the inspection was on **physics**. **Chemistry** and **biology** were sampled during the inspection. Each subject has viable groups for AS-level and each is taught by two teachers. The teaching in all subjects is good and students' achievements reflect past results at GCSE.

Physics

The provision for physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching in physics.
- The good contribution of ICT to learning.
- The small size of groups reduces competition and learning from peers.
- There is a shortage of some equipment and space to leave experimental work set up.

Commentary

174. AS groups vary in size and in 2002 there were 11 students in physics, 20 in biology and five in chemistry. A2 classes are small. Some students in each subject obtain the highest grades each year. Students achieve less well at AS in chemistry and biology compared with the other subjects in the sixth form. Most students who start the course continue until the end of the year and are examined. Results in physics are higher than those in chemistry and biology.
175. The standards students reach in physics are at about the national average. Of the six students who took A2 physics in 2003, three achieved A or B grades, and all passed. Results in 2002 and previous years are similar. Nearly all students who start AS continue into A2. Boys and girls do equally well. Students in Year 13 are expected to plan and design their own investigations but shortage of accommodation means that they cannot leave equipment set up. They have good practical skills and understanding of sources of error and can apply theoretical ideas to investigations, for example in experiments on simple harmonic motion, and rebounding squash balls. All students undertake regularly assessed problems which are thoroughly marked. In a lesson on half-life, students successfully modelled radioactivity decay in order to calculate half-life and displayed good knowledge of nuclear reactions. In a lesson on collision theory students made good use of computer simulations to solve problems. Teachers have good questioning skills and involve students in discussions and decisions. Most physics lessons take place in a newly refurbished laboratory which creates an attractive learning environment.
176. Leadership and management of physics are good, from the head of science. The two teachers involved in physics keep up to date and make good use of modern learning materials.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject.
- Teaching is consistently good and often very good.
- Leadership and management are very good and students receive very good support and guidance.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- All students have easy access to a comprehensive range of high quality on-line learning resources.
- Higher attaining students are insufficiently challenged and fail to secure the highest A-level grades.

Commentary

177. Over the last two years standards in the AS examinations have been above national expectations. In 2003, for example, the lowest grade was D and a quarter of the students obtained grades A or B. At A-level standards have improved since the last inspection and are now above the national average in terms of the average points scored by students. However, over the last three years no students have been awarded grades A or B in the A-level examinations.
178. Students who have studied ICT as a discrete GCSE subject enter the sixth form with a level of knowledge and understanding of ICT that is broadly in line with national expectations. A significant number are also admitted onto the AS course who have not studied ICT at GCSE level. The above average performance of most students in the AS and A-level examinations indicates that achievement in the sixth form is good. This good progress is largely due to the high quality of support and guidance students receive from their teachers.
179. Teachers know their subject well and teach with enthusiasm. Explanations are clear and humour is used effectively to enhance the learning process. Teacher-student relationships are very good and a productive learning environment is created in lessons. Students' work is routinely collected and thoroughly marked with helpful suggestions for improvements. Teachers pay particular attention to the preparation of coursework assignments with students being regularly reminded of the precise requirements of the awarding body's assessment criteria. This enables students to intelligently assess their own work and make appropriate changes.
180. Students make particularly good progress in practical sessions when they can work at their own pace while being supported by effective individual support from the teacher. Resources for sixth form study are very good with a comprehensive range of on-line learning resources being available to students from any computer with an Internet connection, in school or at home. This gives students a degree of autonomy that has a very significant impact on learning and progress.
181. In the lessons observed very good use was made of interactive whiteboards and data projectors. For example, in a Year 13 A-level lesson students were required to give PowerPoint presentations on 'Systems Failures'. These were of a very good standard and it was clear that students had spent considerable time researching the topic and perfecting their presentations. A similarly high level of learning was witnessed in a Year 12 AVCE lesson in which students used the on-line resources to prepare their first assignment on 'Presenting Information'. Very good guidance on how to address the assessment criteria for the assignment was offered by the teacher at the start of the lesson and this advice was

strongly reinforced by the teacher supporting students individually as they worked at the computers.

182. The leadership and management of the sixth form ICT provision are very good. All staff share a clear vision of the future and all are committed to the continued improvement of students' examination results. Detailed schemes of work are in place and reliable systems are used to monitor the progress of the students and set individual targets. The department receives good technical support from the two technicians whose work is closely directed and well managed.
183. There has been good improvement since the last inspection with standards being raised, an increase in the number of students opting for ICT and a significant enhancement of resources available to students.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

184. The only key skills course offered by the school is in ICT and it is primarily aimed at students who have little or no ICT experience at GCSE level. A detailed scheme of work has been written and each student is provided with an appropriate textbook. The teaching is pitched at a level 2 standard but some students may choose to be entered for the level 3 qualification. All the students spoken to in the lesson observed were grateful for this provision and were unanimous in wanting a formal qualification in ICT.

HUMANITIES

The main focus of the inspection was **history**. **Geography** was not inspected in depth in the sixth form. However, it was sampled and in the lesson seen teaching and learning were good. The quality of work seen during the inspection indicates that students will achieve average success. **Geology** was not inspected in depth in the sixth form but it was sampled and in the lesson seen teaching and learning were good. Achievement was good and the quality of work seen indicates that students are achieving average success.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good and often very good; it leads to good achievement.
- Students' attitudes to work are very good.
 - Students do not make enough use of ICT to support their learning.
- Teachers sometimes do not demand enough depth in students' oral answers.

Commentary

185. The standard of work in Years 12 and 13 is broadly average. The AS results in 2002 were well below average. In 2003, results were higher than those of 2002. One third of the students gained an A or B grade. The A-level results in 2003 of those students who took AS in 2002 were well below the 2002 average. The school's value-added data indicates that some students underachieved. The number of students who have taken history at AS and A2 level in the last three years has been small. Their average points score has ranged from average to below average. The standard of work seen during the inspection was average overall. A minority of the work was above average.
186. Students in Year 12 generally have sound knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. They understand terminology satisfactorily. They achieve well in lessons. Their

general political understanding is, however, quite limited, and this affects the pace of progress in some lessons.

187. Most students in Year 13 have good knowledge and understanding. High attainers in Year 13, for instance, demonstrated good understanding of Nazi policies towards the Jews and used German vocabulary and terminology accurately. They explained successfully the implications of the devaluation of the pound by the Wilson government. The highest attainers evaluate well the achievements of past politicians. Most students achieve well in lessons.
188. Students have a very positive attitude to their work. They concentrate, work hard, and do not give up when the work set is demanding. The majority are very willing to join in discussions and thus deepen their understanding.
189. The quality of teaching is good, and often very good. The teachers are confident with their subject. They involve students well through questioning and discussion. The work demanded of students is appropriately challenging. Occasionally, however, teachers do not expect, or ask, students to develop an initial often brief answer by asking them to say more. Relationships in lessons are very good, and lead to a pleasant, though business-like, learning environment.
190. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has built a very effective team of teachers of AS and A-level. The limited use of ICT by students to support their learning is a weakness.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology : product design : graphic products.

Provision in graphic products in the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of leadership and of teaching secure good learning.
- The teachers' subject knowledge is very good and ensures students are moved on at an appropriate rate and depth.
- Assessment and appraisal of work to track students' progress are very thorough, ensuring students achieve their potential.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work, are hardworking and inventive, and have made good progress in the subject since starting sixth form courses.
- The sixth form students do not have their own design studio.
- The timing of modules needs to be reviewed to ensure that practical work can be finished and refined well in advance of the final examinations.

Commentary

191. Results in the AS and A2 examinations in 2003 were largely as predicted, but lower than those in 2002. In the AS examinations, most students gained at least an E grade, showing improvement on their previous GCSE results. In the A2 examinations, the few students who took the examination improved upon their previous AS grades.
192. In work seen during the inspection, students work on individual graphics projects and there is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. By the end of year 13, students' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they begin in the sixth form, is good. They understand the need for thorough analysis of a problem in order to arrive at sensible logical decisions with carefully presented solutions. Portfolios are generally good, as students are adept at technical drawing and are competent in designing. They extend the range of

skills amassed in their earlier years in school, know about materials used by professionals, and make prototypes skilfully. As part of evaluation, and in order to maintain good literacy standards, students assess their own work against existing products, defend their decisions and explain their intentions clearly. Students' skills in explaining their thinking are well developed in year 13, as they are more aware of, for example, the social and moral implications of persuasive advertising. A few have not yet made the transition between doing work at the suggestion of the teacher and setting personal targets and timescales.

193. The quality of teaching is good and secures good learning. Teachers are very skilled; they know the subject and the requirements of the examining boards thoroughly, which encourages and motivates the students. They plan well and ensure that students have scope to develop and demonstrate individuality and expertise. Students are hard-working and have positive opinions about the course, which many of them hope to extend in higher education establishments. Relationships are very good and there is mutual trust and respect. The quality of one-to-one help is high. There is purposeful dialogue between teachers and students and questioning is thorough, helping students to organise their ideas and expand them. They are given honest critical appraisal of their work, suggestions for improvement and a high level of practical assistance, all of which help them to sort out strategies for development. At the end of lessons, the time for evaluation is well used as it ensures that students develop their own questioning ability and confidence in judgement. There is no designated design studio for the sixth form, which prevents them having constant access to their own resources, literature and displays.
194. Leadership and management are very good. The teachers in the department have clear responsibilities for different parts of the AS and A2 courses and meet regularly to plan and discuss work. There is a strong, shared commitment to succeed. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is better; more students now opt to take A-level design; the students have clear coursework deadlines to prevent them from falling behind with their work; the use of ICT has been extended, particularly in connection with designing programs; and the quality of portfolio work is higher. In order to improve overall standards, the department needs to review the timing of modules to ensure that practical work can be finished and refined well in advance of the final examinations.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

No subjects in this area were inspected in detail. One sixth form lesson in **art** was observed. The standard of teaching was satisfactory and standards of work were in line with the national average. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

Theatre studies was also sampled. Students achieved very high average points scores in both AS and A2 level examinations in 2003. In the one lesson seen students were mature in working together and showed a high level of skill. Group work was sensitive and imaginative. Teaching was very good and extremely strong relationships and mutual respect have been created.

BUSINESS

No subjects in this area were inspected in detail. **Leisure and tourism** classes were sampled. In the lesson seen teaching and learning were very good. The quality of work seen indicates students will achieve average success.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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