

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ILKESTON SCHOOL**

Ilkeston

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique Reference Number: 112945

Headteacher: Mr S J Daniels

Lead inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe

Dates of inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> October 2003

Inspection number: 260841

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:	1,176
School address:	King George Avenue Ilkeston Derbyshire
Postcode:	DE7 5HS
Telephone number:	(01159) 303724
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T P Hodson
Date of previous inspection:	9 <sup>th</sup> - 13 <sup>th</sup> and 23 <sup>rd</sup> - 26 <sup>th</sup> February 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This average-sized comprehensive school educates about 1,176 boys and girls aged 11-18 (including a sixth form of 110). Pupils' overall social and economic background is average. Their attainment on entry at 11 is now close to average overall; it has risen steadily from below average since the last inspection in 1998. Ninety-eight per cent of pupils are white, whilst the remaining minority come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is well below the national norm; the proportion with statements of such needs is around average. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. In 2002-2003 about five per cent of pupils joined or left the school other than at the usual time at the beginning or end of the school year. The school gained a Schools Achievement Award in each of the four years 1999-2002 from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), a considerable accolade. A new headteacher took up duty at the beginning of the autumn term 2003.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1025	Dr D A W Biltcliffe	Lead inspector	
9034	Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay inspector	
13452	Mr H Meggitt	Lay inspector	
11479	Mr J A Paine	Team inspector	English; drama; media studies
30576	Mr P Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Science
11190	Dr W M Burke	Team inspector	Art; design and technology
8645	Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Citizenship; music
12470	Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography
8873	Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History
17923	Mr M Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT); special educational needs
4603	Mr A F Ryan	Team inspector	ICT (sixth form)
22046	Dr J Jolliffe	Team inspector	French
13217	Mr M D Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education
10448	Mr M Elson	Team inspector	Religious education
1819	Mr R H Crowther	Team inspector	Business education; health and social care; psychology; sociology

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This average-sized school of some 1,176 boys and girls (including 110 in the sixth form) in the town of Ilkeston was inspected on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> October 2003 by an inspection team led by Dr D A W Biltcliffe.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective school** on most key tasks. Most pupils make good progress and achieve well, especially in Years 10-13. Teaching is good. Most pupils learn conscientiously. Leadership is strong. Management is generally sound and improving. The school does most things well, but has a few, unnecessary weaknesses. It has the potential to become very good; consistent quality and still higher academic achievement are the keys. On its broadly average income and expenditure, it offers good value for money. It is a good school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most pupils (and girls better than boys) progress well. Achievement is best in Years 10 -11.
- GCSE and similar results have been above average overall for the last three years.
- Provision is very good in art, design and technology, music and business education.
- Provision is below par in information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages and religious education (RE).
- Teaching is good overall – very good in Years 10 -11 in art, design and technology and music. It is unsatisfactory in Years 7-11 in ICT and in the non-GCSE course of RE in Years 10 -11.
- Most pupils work hard, behave well, attend regularly and are punctual. A few spoil the picture.
- Pupils' personal care is sensitive and vigilant. Some health and safety issues need attention.
- The new headteacher's leadership and management are outstanding.
- The governing body's endeavour requires a sharper, probing edge – and continuing support.
- This is a good school – hard-working, caring and optimistic. It is on a curve of improvement.

Since its last inspection in 1998, the school has made good progress overall. For example, GCSE results have improved more than they have nationally. They are better than most of those in a similar type of school. Teaching and learning are better than at the last inspection. Leadership remains strong and management is becoming more coordinated. Four national *School Achievement Awards* have recognised the school's quality.

The school's governance and management have not done enough, however, to improve four of the seven main weaknesses identified in 1998. English and general literacy, school financial planning and provision for both higher attainers and pupils with special educational needs have improved satisfactorily. Other issues have slipped or remained static. Boys' overall GCSE attainment increasingly lags well behind girls'. Hardware investment in ICT has not been matched by improved performance. Time allocations for some subjects are still not right. Most of the 1998 breaches of statutory requirements remain. These weaknesses require vigorous resolution.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
For Year 11, "similar schools" are those whose pupils had a similar level of attainment at the end of Year 9.

**Pupils' overall achievement is good.** In 2002, their overall level of attainment was close to average by the end of Year 9. This achievement was satisfactory. Pupils' GCSE and vocational performance in 2002 was much better; their attainment was at least above average on all the usual measures and, overall, much better than usually gained in a similar kind of school. This represents a very good achievement, particularly on vocational courses. Current standards of work by the end of Year 11 are average in most subjects, above average in music, well above average in art and in design and technology, below average in ICT and well below in non-specialist RE.

**Pupils' personal qualities are developed well.** Their moral and social development are promoted strongly. Spiritual and cultural growth is satisfactory. The assemblies seen were inspirational. Pupils relate well to one another and to adults. Most behave very responsibly. The few who sometimes do not are handled patiently but firmly. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality for school is good and for lessons satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of pupils' education is good.** The educational climate is warm and encouraging. **Teaching is good** overall and in most subjects and better than in 1998; it is usually well organised, clear, interesting and encouraging. It is often very good in art, design and technology and music, but not good enough in ICT and RE. Most pupils respond well, work hard and progress well.

The school's curriculum is basically sound, but has important gaps in ICT, modern foreign languages and RE; there is not enough time for some courses in the humanities and PE. The thoughtful care for nearly all aspects of pupils' welfare gives them the confidence to do well.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The school generally runs smoothly. Senior and middle management are usually effective in their roles; loose coordination and imprecise monitoring have weakened a few tasks. Governors provide valuable support, but insufficient challenge. The new headteacher's outstanding leadership is effectively and sensitively focusing attention on an all-round, quality performance. The school has a renewed sense of purpose and optimism. It has a promising future.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents believe that the school does most things well. They commend highly the school's encouragement, aspirations and induction arrangements. A significant minority (rightly) feel that home-school relations could be closer and that they would like more information. Management has carefully noted these concerns. The vast majority of pupils feel it is a good school to attend and that they are expected to work hard, but many would like to see better behaviour. Inspectors support the positive aspects recorded. Progress reports to parents can be better. Unsatisfactory behaviour from a small minority is usually positively re-channelled and detected bullying is firmly dealt with.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve its good overall provision are:

- raise pupils' level of achievement (and especially that of boys) to a good standard throughout;
- lift the overall standard of work in main-school ICT and in RE and careers in Years 10 -11;
- remove the weaknesses in teaching and learning identified in the main body of the report;
- ensure that all subjects have sufficient time to cover course requirements \*;
- ensure that all managers' roles are clarified, interlocked and monitored;

- establish a comprehensive management information system to inform all key tasks – and especially to evaluate accurately pupils' long-term progress and the school's performance;
- produce clearer reports to parents about their children's attainment and progress; and, to meet statutory requirements, ensure that:
- ICT is taught sufficiently to all pupils and is monitored across subjects in Years 10-11 \*;
- RE is taught in Years 10-11 in accordance with the local agreed syllabus;
- RE is taught in the sixth form \*;
- all pupils in Years 7-9 who are not "disapplied" are taught a modern foreign language; and
- all pupils experience a daily act of collective worship \*.

\* = a long-standing weakness, identified also at the last (1998) inspection.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT ILKESTON SCHOOL

The school's part of the joint post-16 provision in Ilkeston (the *Ilkeston Venture*) is smaller than average at around 110 students. Both GCE AS-/A2-level and vocational courses are offered on the school's site.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory.** In 2002, GCE A-level grade quality was below average. Students achieved well in English and art, but most did not make enough progress in the sciences. Vocational (AVCE) results were good. The 2003 results were similar overall, but more students made good progress. Teaching is good and students learn well. The sixth-form is led well and managed satisfactorily; guidance is strong, but academic performance is not evaluated incisively enough. The sixth-form is not fully cost-effective; many groups are small and sixth-form provision costs more than the income provided for it.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students have a wide choice of courses on the school's site and beyond.
- GCE A-level English and art are strong, well taught and produce high grades.
- Most AVCE courses have high pass rates and good quality grades.
- The majority of students make good progress, but a significant minority do not.
- Overall A-level pass rates and grade quality are a little below average.
- Most teaching is good. It is very good in art, health and social care, and sociology.
- Students value the sixth form's care, friendliness and comradeship.
- Accommodation and research facilities are unsatisfactory.
- Attendance records and cost-effective, course innovation are too low a priority.
- Overall, students enjoy their experience of sixth-form life here.



## 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	<b>Very good.</b> <b>English literature</b> is well taught in intellectually challenging groups. Students make substantial progress and achieve good results.
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Average <b>mathematics</b> standards are reached as a result of good, often highly imaginative teaching. An improving subject.
Science	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Past achievement in <b>biology</b> has been poor, but current work standards are satisfactory. Most teaching seen was good.
Information and communication technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students receive well-structured, helpful teaching. Most have limited prior experience of <b>ICT</b> , but make sound progress.
Humanities	<b>Satisfactory</b> provision is made in <b>geography</b> . The purposeful course has high quality fieldwork. Teaching is well organised, but requires more rigour. <b>Good history</b> provision. Average standards and good progress are gained from thorough, supportive teaching. <b>Satisfactory</b> overall provision is made in <b>psychology</b> . Results are below average. Good, lively teaching, but work discussion is sometimes limited. <b>Good sociology</b> provision. Students achieve well as a result of high quality teaching that is closely geared to their individual needs.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Very good</b> provision is made in <b>art</b> . The teaching of these skilled artists and designers is usually outstanding. Most students achieve very well. <b>Good</b> provision is made in <b>media studies</b> . Teaching is usually good (technical precision emphasised) and is always well organised.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> <b>Business studies</b> has an above average pass rate as a result of very helpful, well-structured teaching and students' consequent enthusiasm.
Health and social care	<b>Very good.</b> The <b>health and social care</b> course is notable for high quality teaching, thorough organisation and an excellent class rapport.
<i>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'.</i>	

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The quality of these aspects is good overall. Students feel well looked after. Close support is offered by knowledgeable tutors. Most students feel that they can resort to thoughtful, sensitive advice and guidance. Advice on higher education is strong and well resourced. There are not enough books for research and wider reading. Students know one another and sixth-form staff well and appreciate the friendly atmosphere for study. There are suitable formal and informal ways for students to be consulted.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is well led and satisfactorily managed. The school has created an imaginative, extensive link with the local college of further education that provides students with a very good choice

of subjects and courses. It has developed a powerful ethos of friendly, supportive and enjoyable learning, despite scattered accommodation. The sixth form has a sense of purpose. Much of this is down to the commitment and enthusiasm of the director and other staff.

Management ensures that most things run smoothly. There are, however, weaknesses. Students' attendance on site is inadequately regulated. The statutory requirement to teach a programme of RE is not observed. Despite students' good experience, sixth-form provision is neither adequately costed nor fully cost-effective; alternative ways of offering good quality teaching programmes have been insufficiently explored and analysed. The school is planning early scrutiny of these issues.

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Sixth formers like the school. They commend its friendly, community feel. They find staff helpful, understanding and encouraging. Teaching, subject choice, independent research and most facilities meet with widespread approval, but library facilities are (correctly) felt to be not good enough. A small minority would like closer tutoring. Overall, they regard the sixth form as a very good experience.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' overall standard of attainment is average by the end of Year 9. This is a satisfactory achievement. In GCSE and similar Year 11 examinations, pupils' overall attainment has been above average for the last three years – a good achievement. Girls have recently done much better overall than boys in GCSE. Pupils' attainment is average in most subjects by the end of Year 11. Students' overall standard in GCE Advanced (A) level examinations is a little below average, but the achievement of the majority is good. The pass rate on most sixth-form vocational courses is high.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' good achievement and the rise in standards in GCSE and vocational examinations.
- The good progress pupils make in Years 10-11.
- Progress is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9, but slower than in Years 10-11.
- Attainment in art and in design and technology is especially high.
- Attainment and achievement are not good enough in ICT and RE.
- Sixth-formers' progress is improving and is now generally good.

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.4 (30.6)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	34.3 (33.6)	34.7 (34.4)
science	32.3 (31.7)	33.3 (33.1)

*There were 206 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2001.*

1. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the proportion of pupils who achieved the basic national standard of at least Level 5 was average in all the core subjects of English, mathematics and science; only mathematics (the strongest subject), however, was close to the national average for the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 6. In 2003, results were about the same as the previous year's in English and mathematics, but a little lower in science.
2. When these 2002 Year 9 results are compared with those in schools that have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed in line with the group average, but did best in mathematics. Girls tend to be ahead of boys in English by the end of Year 9, but the gap between the sexes is generally smaller in this school than is the case nationally. Girls and boys usually do equally well overall in mathematics and science. Since 1998, the school's results have risen broadly in line with the national trend.
3. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress as they move from the beginning of Year 7 to the end of Year 9. The attainment level of the Year 7 intake is rising. Before 2001, the intake standard was below average (with markedly fewer high attainers than usually found), but it has risen to the normal

level in the last two years.

4. By the end of year 9, pupils reach an average standard in most subjects. Their attainment is, however, above average in art, design and technology, French, music and physical education (PE). Pupils achieve well in these subjects. Both attainment and achievement are too low, however, in information and communication technology (ICT). A good rate of progress stems from challenging, interesting teaching and the positive attitudes to learning shown by most pupils. Progress is unsatisfactory in a few lessons where class control is weak and teaching dull.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	61 (62)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.0 (n/a)	n/a (n/a)

*There were 195 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2001.*

5. In the GCSE and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) examinations of 2002, pupils' overall attainment was above the national average on most of the usual range of measures. Over the five years since the last inspection, GCSE results have risen significantly from below the national average to above it. In 2002, for example, the proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining five or more of the higher (A\*-C) grades was more than double the figure for 1996 – a substantial improvement that was greater than the rise nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five A\*-G grades has been high (in the range 97-99 per cent) every year over the 1998-2002 period, although they dipped to 95 per cent in 2003. These results represent a good and commendable achievement by the school. The thorough teaching in Years 10-11 and the very good results in business education and manufacturing are the major keys to this success.
6. In the core subjects, pupils' attainment of a grade in the range A\*-C in GCSE in 2002 was close to average in mathematics and science, but slightly above average in English. Over the last four years, English results have been uniformly good. Results in mathematics and science, too, have improved (although less than in English) since 2000. By the end of Year 11, English has moved up sharply and mathematics has lost its Year 9 pre-eminence. The proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C in all of English, mathematics and science is, however, a little below the national average.
7. When pupils' performances in their GCSE subjects up to (and including) 2002 are compared with one another, pupils usually do significantly better in English language, English literature, art, and design and technology than in most of their other subjects. They have tended to do worse in mathematics, science, history, French and in (twilight-hours) PE. Nearly three-quarters (44 out of 61) of the A\* grades gained in 2003 came from business education and a further five from art. No pupil achieved the highest A\* grade in 2002 or 2003 in English language or design and technology (food). There is room for more of the top grades in many other subjects, too.
8. When the school's GCSE results are compared with those of similar schools, this school's performance was much better than most others in both 2001 and 2002: in 2001, indeed, it was amongst the top five per cent of its grouping on most measures. By the same comparison, pupils' overall performance in 2002 was in line with the group average in mathematics, above it in science and well above it in English.

9. Girls achieved a greater proportion of the higher (A\*-C) grades in GCSE than boys in 2001 – seven in every ten girls did so, compared with about half the boys. The overall gap between the sexes increased in 2002 and 2003 – girls did better still and boys slightly worse than in 2001. In 2001-2003 the gap between the sexes was much larger than it was nationally. In 2002, girls did much better than boys in English: 75 per cent of the girls, compared with 39 per cent of the boys, for instance, gained a higher (A\*-C) grade. Girls performed much better, too, in both mathematics and science. The school needs to redouble its efforts to investigate incisively and individually the reasons for this significant slippage in the overall level of boys' performance over the last four years. An improved tracking system over the whole of Years 7-11 is urgently required as part of this exercise.
10. Taking into account their achievements in the national tests two years earlier, pupils generally make good (and sometimes very good) progress in their studies during Years 10-11. The school exceeded the realistic GCSE targets it set for itself in the 2002 and 2003 examinations. The higher results have been attained partly as a result of the improving quality of teaching over recent years, the positive climate for learning established in most classes and the strong contribution made by two GNVQ courses (where each course counts as four GCSE subjects).
11. Classwork by the end of Year 11 is average in most subjects. It is, however, above average in music and PE; well above average in art and in design and technology; below average in ICT; and well below average in RE. The most able pupils generally make satisfactory progress (except in ICT and RE). Achievement is very good in music.
12. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. They learn well in literacy classes, where their reading ages improve more quickly than might be expected. Good learning takes place in art and in design and technology: teachers understand their needs well and make suitable provision. Careful target-setting helps these pupils to learn well in science. In contrast, their learning is unsatisfactory in geography, because work is not adapted sufficiently to their needs.
13. Across the school, pupils' standard in all aspects of literacy is average overall and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils generally read fluently, accurately and with expression, although there is less reading aloud than usual. The strongest (and often better than normal) features of written work are handwriting, presentation and, where encouraged, note-taking. Spelling, punctuation and the drafting of work are average. The quality of speech is average (although a minority of pupils mumble). Class discussion is enjoyed, but flows freely only where teachers regularly incorporate and encourage it. In nearly all cases pupils listen carefully and quite often very intently.
14. The standard of mathematics used across the curriculum is broadly average, partly as a result of internal training and guidance for teachers. Most pupils have reasonable facility in handling mental calculations. Data-handling and bar-graph discussions are thorough in design and technology. Graph work is a strong feature of geography and ICT. Overall attainment in a range of ICT applications is, however, below average by the end of Year 11, partly because there are no specialist-taught lessons and no coordinated approach across all courses.

## Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	82 (87)	90 (90)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	25 (32)	36 (n/a)
Average point score per pupil	195.7 (152.3)	263.3 (217.6)

*There were 23 (36) pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2001.*

15. The overall results at GCE Advanced (A) level for those students entered for two or more subjects have been below average since the last inspection. The points gained by students for each subject were, however, average in 2001. The pass rate was lower than it was nationally in 2001 and 2002. The proportion of the highest (A-B) grades obtained came close to the national average in 2002. The 2003 picture was similar to that of the previous year.
16. Taking into account the quality of grades that they gained in GCSE examinations two years earlier, the majority of students made sound progress in their studies to A-level in 2003: on the subject grades that could be directly compared, students made good (or better) progress in just over half their subjects and satisfactory progress in about one fifth. Progress was unsatisfactory in a further quarter, but particularly occurred in biology and (to a lesser extent) amongst students with low prior attainment in a few other subjects. Students generally achieved well on vocational courses and in sociology.
17. All students who took GCE A-level (A2) in 2003 passed in English (both language and literature), physics (just one student), art, geography, history, drama, media studies and sociology. The quality of grades was particularly high in English and art (as in 2002). All students passed the advanced vocational courses (AVCE) in business education, health and social care and in travel and tourism (with generally high grades in the first two subjects); only three out of nine students, however, passed the ICT course, with modest grades.
18. In the GCE Advanced Supplementary (AS) level examinations in 2002, 78 per cent of students passed: both the pass rate and quality of grades were below average. All students passed, however, in English literature, art, geography, drama and sociology. Pass rates were below half in mathematics and chemistry. In 2003, about a quarter of the entries (excluding general studies) were again unclassified.
19. The small minority of students responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were generally very satisfied with their sixth-form courses – as, for example, the quality of teaching, the suitability of courses and study methods, and the friendly climate. A small minority of concerns centred around pastoral support and study guidance. Only a few students leave courses early here – about eight per cent in the last academic year, usually to enter employment and/or for further training.
20. Students are generally at least average overall in their use of the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Most skim and research written material competently and many do so quickly. Note-taking is generally well done, although some students require more training in suitable techniques. The quality of oral work varies widely; some students are very confident and articulate, whilst others are hesitant. Capability in ICT is broadly average, although most students have less than usual ICT experience before the sixth form. Overall, most students make good progress in the majority of subjects.

## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils relate well to one another and to adults. The school nurtures carefully their respect for other people, distinguishing right from wrong and living responsibly. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality for school is good and for lessons satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assemblies greatly enhance pupils' personal development and the corporate life of the school.
- Pupils are generally serious about school and work hard in lessons.
- Relationships amongst pupils and with teachers are good.
- The school is strong and effective at promoting pupils' moral and social development.
- Smoking in the toilets is a problem.

### Commentary

21. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory overall and in line with the pattern nationally. In the 2001-2002 academic year, it was about the same as at the time of the last inspection. In the most recent (2002-2003) academic year it was around the national average at 91.4 per cent. The unsatisfactory attendance of a small minority and the taking of term-time holidays spoil the overall satisfactory picture, because most pupils attend well. Pupils are punctual to school. Punctuality for lessons is satisfactory, although a few pupils (usually boys) dawdle between lessons.
22. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to focus on the level of attendance, but there is more it could do. It does not, for example, have a written attendance policy, with precise targets and actions, to guide its work, it does not make contact with home to explore unexplained absence immediately and it insufficiently underlines the importance of good attendance in its prospectus. There are weaknesses, too, in the keeping of some registers – such as pencilled or altered entries and occasional blanks.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year, 2001-2002 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.9	School data	0.3
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.*

23. The school successfully fulfils its aim of enabling pupils to mature well at school. Pupils begin most days at school by engaging in the programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) in registration/tutorial time. This gives form tutors the opportunity to get to know the members of their form well and to set a good pattern of learning and behaviour for the day.
24. Pupils have assemblies once a week. Their quality is very good. The school upholds, in an inspiring way, such ideals as living together in a community and living without bias. Assemblies conclude with a prayer that is not only an act of collective worship, but also a genuine expression of shared aspiration. The *Amen* at the end is an audible assertion of pupils' assent. The lack of regular music is the only weakness in an already very good experience. On other days of the week the school infrequently provides pupils with the opportunity to engage in an act of collective worship.

25. In lessons, most pupils are attentive to their teachers and keen to learn. They show interest in their work and concentrate well. The school's emphasis on the value and importance of learning is supported by its good system of rewards and sanctions. At the time of the last inspection, pupils in Years 10 and 11 were noticeably less responsive in lessons than pupils in Years 7-9. This is no longer the case. This improvement is a significant indication that pupils now learn with greater confidence.
26. Pupils maintain their good behaviour outside class, often with the minimum of supervision. At breaks and at lunchtime they show respect for one another and for the property of the school. There is a small amount of litter about (although the problem is being thoughtfully addressed), but very few graffiti. Access to the library and to ICT is good. These facilities enhance the opportunity for pupils to develop their desire to learn.
27. The school has addressed the problem of bullying with vigour – an issue highlighted as a matter of some concern by many pupils. It has raised pupils' awareness of the incidence of bullying and of its unacceptability. Only occasional incidents of minor bullying were observed during the inspection. There is general agreement that any known examples of bullying are rapidly and effectively dealt with.
28. The school forum (the elected body representing all pupils and students) has established a supportive peer-counselling system, *Time Out*. Thoughtful training has been provided for peer counsellors, who are readily recognisable to other pupils by the badge they wear. This initiative has successfully addressed, but not entirely allayed, pupils' and parents' concerns about bullying.
29. Both pupils and parents raise concern about the important issue of in-school smoking. The school is fully aware of the problem, but has found it a difficult challenge. Complaints about the amount of smoking in the toilets (especially the girls' toilets) are justified and many pupils resent the consequent inconvenience and unpleasantness. On this matter many pupils believe that the school does not do enough to stop what they regard as unacceptable behaviour.
30. In other respects the school is good at promoting pupils' moral and social development. The norm is for teachers to treat pupils with consideration and respect and to help them to understand other people's feelings, values and beliefs. In RE, for example, pupils in Years 7-9 learn how religious beliefs affect people's attitudes and actions. Through the year councils and the school forum, pupils develop their understanding of and ability to apply, the principles that distinguish right from wrong. The school engenders in pupils a sense that they have a role to fulfil within the school and, through the school, out to the wider community.
31. Pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness are satisfactory. The school promotes these qualities effectively through assemblies, tutorial provision, the mentoring programme and subjects such as art, music and RE. Where teaching is very good, the promotion of life's spiritual dimension is often one of its distinguishing features. In most lessons, however, teachers do not do enough specifically to help pupils to become reflective and aware of personal interactions. The school has not planned provision for the spiritual dimension of personal development across the curriculum. The infrequency of assemblies and the weaknesses in RE (especially in Years 10 and 11) are also lost opportunities.
32. Pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultural traditions is satisfactory. Very good opportunities exist in art and music, but in most other subjects explicit provision for cultural (as for spiritual development) is too unplanned – as it was at the time of the last inspection.



## Sixth form

33. Students' attitudes are good and their behaviour very good. Students relate very well to one another and to the adults in the school. They are willing to be enterprising and take responsibility. They have their own sixth form council. The training of some students in peer counselling has helped to secure freedom from bullying, racism and other forms of harassment; sixth formers took a lead role in the establishment of *Time Out* as a service to pupils in the main school.
34. The school does not keep overall statistics for sixth-form attendance - either for attendance on its own site or a combined figure for the school and further education college sites. Although subject teachers are thorough in keeping their own attendance records for individual classes, the resulting figures are not collated, in order (for example) to pinpoint trends or cater for emergencies. Nor does the school have an adequate "signing in / out" policy. This approach is unsatisfactory.
35. It is not possible to make an accurate judgement about the level of attendance. At the beginning of October the school calculated that sixth-form attendance for the first four weeks of the new academic year was at the good level of 93.8 per cent. Within that figure, the fourth week's overall attendance was unsatisfactory at 89.8 per cent. During the inspection, the attendance at lessons on the school's site was broadly satisfactory. The school now requires a thorough system of registration and recording for all sixth-formers that adopts a sensible balance between accurate, up-to-date record-keeping and its thoughtful policy of allowing students to show suitable responsibility and maturity. Sixth-form punctuality is satisfactory.
36. The school provides a good range of activities for students and they respond well. In lessons, most students work hard and continue to develop very responsibly into adulthood. English, art and media studies make a very good contribution to their spiritual and cultural development. The student body, supported sensitively by the director of the sixth form, has created a friendly community.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils: 2002-2003***

### ***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	1091	11	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	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 educational climate in this school is good. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The assessment of pupils' work and progress is usually well done in class and satisfactorily across their time in school.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good overall and higher than it was at the last inspection. It is at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons. Most pupils learn well and make good progress as a result of teaching that is well organised and interesting. In only a few cases do pupils not make the progress they could. The quality of teaching and learning is similar throughout the school. There is a substantial core of very good teaching in this school.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall throughout the school.
- They are often very good in art, design and technology and music.
- Teaching is noticeably better than it was at the last inspection.
- Pupils use GCSE criteria well to assess their work and revise for examinations.
- Sixth-formers have a good understanding of how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in ICT in Years 7-11 and poor in non-GCSE RE in Years 10-11.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 223 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (3%)	43 (19%)	105 (47%)	56 (25%)	10 (5%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; the figures in brackets show percentages.*

37. The quality of teaching is good at all stages of the school, including the sixth form, although slightly stronger in Years 10-13 than in Years 7-9. It was satisfactory or better in almost all lessons – satisfactory in 95 per cent of all lessons seen, good in nearly half and very good (occasionally outstanding) in over a fifth of all lessons. Twelve lessons, however, had teaching that was unsatisfactory (and in two cases poor).
38. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. In 1998, 11 per cent of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Now just under six per cent of teaching falls below a basic, satisfactory level. Just over half of the teaching was good (or better) at the last inspection, but that proportion has now increased to seven in every ten lessons. The proportion of very good (or better) teaching has risen from 17 to 22 per cent. Much teaching was judged to be weak in 1998 in ICT and modern foreign languages. It remains unsatisfactory in ICT (and an urgent matter for the school to address). It is now good in French in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10-11.
39. Teachers' subject knowledge is usually strong. This leads to confident teaching and a clear sense of purpose. In most cases, teachers explain ideas clearly and answer pupils' questions accurately. In the best lessons, teachers' enthusiasm shines through, ensuring that pupils both listen carefully and remember key facts well. They help pupils to build up their understanding of topics step by step and infuse pupils with a love of learning. Occasionally slight inaccuracies in information or overlong

explanations mar a good picture. Subject knowledge and understanding are weak features of some RE lessons. In contrast, in an outstanding Year 11 music lesson, for example, the teacher's enthusiastic musicianship secured high professionalism from pupils and his exemplar-playing of Beethoven's *Pathétique* sonata in a Year 10 class both enthused and challenged already confident pupils. The level of subject knowledge and commitment amongst art teachers is an important factor in the high standards achieved by pupils.

40. Most lessons are well planned. Aims and objectives are often put on the board. The beginnings of lessons usually incorporate a suitably brisk revision of previous work – in most cases eliciting from pupils what they remember, but in some cases simply telling them what they (should) know. In the best lessons, pupils know the stages and timing of lesson sections and plan ahead with confidence. In a minority of cases, pupils are not told clearly how the lesson will unfold. In a few lessons, teachers spend too long on the introductory stage, talk too much and do not draw the ends of lessons together effectively.
41. The level of intellectual or creative challenge posed by teachers is a major factor in how well pupils achieve, since the vast majority of pupils are willing to learn. In most lessons, teachers stretch pupils intellectually to at least a satisfactory degree. In the most interesting and exciting lessons teachers ensure that there is always a sharp intellectual edge that draws pupils into deeper thinking about the standard and breadth of their work. They expect pupils to think hard, ponder alternatives and revel in debate. In a minority of cases, lessons plod along slowly and too comfortably; pupils' minds are under-engaged. The highest standards are encouraged in Years 10-13 in most subjects. An important task for the school is now to ensure that all lessons approach the high intellectual standard of the best.
42. Teachers generally think carefully about the balance of teaching methods they use. Formal introductions and explanations are usually clear and interesting. In the best cases they are very precise and well timed. Work in pairs or groups is, in the main, used thoughtfully and appropriately. Brainstorming, when occasionally exploited, is done well. Whole-class exposition or question-and-answer sessions are, in the main, conducted encouragingly. A fairly common weakness, however, is the lack of precise guidance (or reminders) to pupils about the skills and techniques of such tasks as extracting key points from texts or subsequently sequencing them for oral presentation or formal writing. Rarely (with very honourable exceptions in art, design and technology and music) do teachers show pupils directly how they themselves undertake such tasks.
43. Most classes are well managed. As a result of teachers' generally good class control, pupils settle down to work quickly. Time is used well. Pupils know that they are at school to learn and do their best, and that teachers have their best interests at heart. Most classes are marked by warm relationships. Not infrequently learning is fun – as in many scientific investigations. Lack of class control and respect occur in a few classes, resulting in poor coverage of lesson content and insecure understanding. Minor silliness hinders a few pupils' (usually boys') learning. Pupils enjoy class discussion (as in mathematics). Sometimes teachers resort to "driving" information into passive pupils; the result is that these pupils do not take much part in lessons, rely too much on their teachers for guidance or copy down what they do not understand.
44. Support staff are generally thoroughly briefed and well used within lessons, although more are needed for pupils with special educational needs. Thoughtful use is made of most resources – as, for instance, in enlivening and illustrating topics with whiteboard presentations or video-recorded snippets or in reviewing with pupils the merits of a range of reference books. Most teachers undertake lesson assessments carefully – a particular strength of teaching in design and technology and in French. Suitable homework is generally set. Overall, teachers set great store by involving and including all pupils, whatever their backgrounds or inclinations, in all classwork.

45. Teaching is satisfactory overall in mathematics, citizenship, geography, history and RE in Years 7-9, and in mathematics, citizenship, history and French in Years 10-11. It is unsatisfactory in Years 7-11 in ICT and poor in Years 10-11 in non-GCSE RE work. It is very good in art and in design and technology in Years 10-11. In all other subjects, courses and stages it is good, enabling most pupils to make good progress and achieve well.
46. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly in most subjects. Assessment is done very well in art, in design and technology and music, but poorly in ICT; ICT is not taught separately in Years 10 and 11 and the school does not assess how well it is used in other subjects. The regular assessments of pupils' work against national levels are usually done accurately, apart from an overestimation of Year 9 geography standards. Teachers usually judge well in lessons when pupils are ready to move forward. Classwork is almost always pitched at reasonably challenging levels. Individual Education Plans, however, are not always used, when teachers plan work for pupils with special educational needs.
47. Most pupils have a good feel for how well they are progressing. Some teachers involve pupils closely in making their own assessments. In food technology, for example, GCSE pupils use the criteria set by the examination board to plan their future work. In mathematics, pupils study recently marked work to choose the most suitable worksheets. In PE, however, pupils receive little constructive advice on how to improve.
48. Teachers usually assess pupils accurately and make good use of this information to group pupils of similar ability together. The school inadequately, however, coordinates the use of data across all subjects and year groups. It now requires a comprehensive system that tracks individual pupils or whole year groups accurately throughout their school life.

### **Sixth form**

49. Fifty-seven sixth-form lessons were inspected. The quality of teaching ranges from outstanding to satisfactory and is good overall. All the lessons inspected were taught at least satisfactorily: nearly two-thirds were well taught and a further fifth were very good (in three cases outstanding). The quality of teaching is very similar in Years 12 and 13, and has improved since 1998: then about 60 per cent of lessons were well taught (or better), whereas 84 per cent of the teaching seen was of this quality.
50. The strongest features of sixth-form teaching are the aim for high standards and the high level of expectation and sensitive challenge in most subjects. Most teachers encourage students to undertake private research, to think things through for themselves and to use appropriate technical terms. They keep up a good pace, whilst ensuring that students think critically about issues. In outstanding art lessons seen, all students made substantial progress, because the teaching stimulated their enthusiasm and rapidly honed their skills.
51. A few lessons have features that require improvement. In these, teachers tend to talk too much, restrict any incisive or extensive discussion and spoon-feed information or views. The result is that students in these classes tend to remain silent, lack the confidence to express their thoughts clearly and precisely, and display a low level of reasoning. Literacy and numeracy are generally well taught and used.
52. The pre-inspection questionnaire, completed by a small minority of pupils, gives a favourable view of sixth-form teaching. All respondents agreed that the teaching they received was challenging and stretching. They all felt that staff have suitable subject expertise and that they

themselves were encouraged to work independently and carry out research. Nearly all believed that worthwhile homework was set.

53. Teaching is good in nearly all subjects, including the core subjects of English, mathematics and (most) science. It is very good in art. It is satisfactory in geography. As a result of the generally high quality of teaching, most students learn with commitment and interest and are well prepared for external examinations.
54. Assessment is consistently well used in all subjects to feed back promptly to students. Subject teachers make good use of questions from past examination papers to judge attainment accurately and prepare students for examinations. Targets are updated regularly, so that work is at a constantly challenging level for each student. The assessment of individuals' progress is good. The school does not, however, have a system of evaluating accurately the effectiveness of the sixth form as a whole in "adding value" to the results that students attain.

### **The curriculum**

55. The school's curriculum is basically sound, but has gaps; it mostly meet pupils' needs, but not all the statutory curriculum is taught to everyone. Sixth-form choice is extensive. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered. Pupils are taught by suitably qualified staff and have sufficient books and equipment of good quality. Careers education is not good enough.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum in Years 7-9 is broad and balanced.
- Sixth-form subject choice is wide, but enrichment activities thin.
- The school offers many learning activities outside the school day.
- Staff are well qualified. There are enough good learning resources except in the sixth form.
- Inadequate time is allocated to teach several subjects effectively.
- The quality of careers education in Years 10-11 is unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements are not fully met for ICT, RE and modern foreign languages.
- A daily act of collective worship is not provided for all pupils.

### **Commentary**

56. In Years 7-9, the breadth and balance of the curriculum are good overall. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught as well as RE, drama and personal, social and health education (PSHE). There are, however, weaknesses. Pupils can only study a single language, French. The time allocated to teach geography and history (as reported at the time of the last inspection) and citizenship is low, so that these subjects are not taught in sufficient depth and detail.
57. In Years 10-11, a satisfactory range of subjects is offered. Pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics and (double-award) science as well as design and technology, PE, RE and careers. They choose additional subjects from a good range of nine GCSE and GNVQ courses. There are just two vocationally orientated courses offered, only one of which provides effective continuity with the range of such courses offered in Years 12-13. No time is allocated for GCSE PE, but this course is taught after school to an increasing number of pupils. The teaching time provided for the course is, however, insufficient to cover the study programme effectively.
58. Statutory requirements for subjects are met except for ICT and RE in Years 10-11. The allocation of time for RE in Years 10-11 is low; curriculum arrangements to teach the course are disjointed and do not meet the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus. There is no taught course for ICT

in Years 10-11 and the programmes of study are not taught sufficiently in other subjects. This deficiency was reported at the time of the last inspection and has not been given enough attention. The statutory requirement for all pupils in Years 7-11 to experience a daily act of worship is not met.

59. The PSHE programme, which includes appropriate education about sex and relationships and the harmful effects of drug misuse, is taught by form tutors during tutor time for 20 minutes at the start of the school day on three days each week. Such short periods of time lead to a disjointed and restricted approach. The scheme of work is carefully planned and well written, with an effective system of assessment and a good range of resource materials. The course is appropriately enhanced with termly "events". For these, the timetable is suspended to enable activities to take place on such topics as alcohol awareness and citizenship. There is, however, insufficient coordination of the programme. No formal, systematic monitoring of the quality of the course is undertaken.
60. All pupils experience all subjects of the curriculum except for French in Years 7-11. A small group of pupils in Years 7-9, for whom learning a foreign language is not deemed appropriate by the school, receives additional lessons in literacy. The school has not met its statutory obligation to apply formally for disapplication from the National Curriculum for these pupils. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 10-11 who have a particular aptitude in science do not have the option of taking the three separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics.
61. In most subjects, pupils are grouped in classes that are organised on the basis of their prior attainment. There are, however, no whole-school criteria for grouping pupils: individual subject departments group pupils as they deem most appropriate. This arrangement is broadly successful, as teachers usually match work well to the differing needs of pupils. The school works closely with outside agencies to make sensible provision for pupils for whom the full range of courses is not judged to be appropriate.
62. The quality of education provided to prepare pupils for the next stage of education is unsatisfactory. Suitable time is allocated in Years 10-11 for a course in careers education, taught by qualified staff. There are, however, no written policies or scheme of work against which to assess pupils' progress or to evaluate the effectiveness of the course. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall; the methods used are often unsuitable and pupils are not managed well enough. Pupils have good access to a well-stocked and well-organised careers library. All pupils participate in very successful work experience for two weeks in Year 10.
63. The curriculum is reviewed regularly. This has resulted in the continuing development of vocationally orientated courses in Years 10-11. Curricular planning and decisions are not, however, based on an up-to-date policy or on systematic monitoring or evaluation. There are no formalised links between senior managers and subject departments to monitor curricular quality and suitability. Most subject schemes of work are of good quality. Those in ICT and RE are unsatisfactory.
64. A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities enhances the curriculum. Over half the school's subjects provide support for pupils outside the school day - through, for example, general interest groups, clubs and help with study. Pupils participate fully in a good spread of activities, particularly in music, fieldwork, visits to theatres and art galleries, and residential trips in this country and abroad. They participate enthusiastically in a wide range of sports and inter-school fixtures.
65. The school has a full complement of suitably qualified staff except for RE. The lack of specialist teaching in RE (apart from that given by the head of department) restricts the content of the

curriculum and the quality of teaching. There are sufficient technicians. Learning support assistants help pupils with special educational needs well, but there are not enough of them to provide support in all the lessons where it is required.

66. The school is set in pleasant, spacious grounds. It has a purpose-built drama studio and an excellent sports hall and ICT facilities. Accommodation is tight: rooms are constantly occupied and many are too small for some activities when large classes use them. Most "temporary" classrooms and the science accommodation are outmoded. The rooms used for mathematics are spread out. This makes it difficult for staff to communicate or establish a departmental identity and incurs a duplication of resources.
67. The school's learning resources are sufficient and of good quality. There are enough textbooks and equipment (including an appropriate number of up-to-date computers) to teach subjects effectively. The library is attractive and well organised, but is too small and does not have sufficient books for pupils to use for pleasure or research.
68. The school makes satisfactory provision overall for pupils with special educational needs. Special literacy lessons meet their needs well by drawing on an extensive range of resources, including computer programs. The GCSE entry-level course enhances pupils' literacy, mathematics, ICT competence and social skills.
69. Teaching assistants provide good support. They have a thorough understanding of what pupils with special educational needs require and work well with subject teachers. There is, however, not enough of this provision to provide appropriate support whenever it is needed. A noteworthy feature is the wide-ranging contribution made by teaching assistants. They have, for instance, been involved in establishing games activities for handicapped pupils from a number of schools and regularly run a homework club. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are well used in subjects such as art and in design and technology, but little use is made of them in geography and French.
70. The school meets the requirements both of statements of special educational need and of those designated as requiring "school action" or "school action plus". It complies with the *Code of Practice* for pupils with special educational needs. The special needs coordinator is highly experienced and knowledgeable. He provides good support and advice to other teachers. Although support from the school's educational psychologist is limited, it is well used – as, for example, through an intensive, personalised teaching programme. There is good provision for pupils with behavioural problems or physical disabilities. This is a very "inclusive" school.
71. Pupils with special gifts and talents achieve satisfactorily. The school only began to enrich its provision for these pupils just over one year ago. Only those pupils currently in Year 8 have benefited from a specific programme of activities. These activities have included a "summer school", a cooperative venture with a local university on a geological theme. For the last two years, a small number of pupils have attended the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth.
72. The school is currently identifying pupils with special gifts or talents in Year 10 and will soon do the same for Year 7. The lengthy programme of identification is scheduled to be completed in 2004. Monitoring of the performance of gifted and talented pupils identifies those not performing as well as they should. This work is satisfactorily coordinated. It is not, however, as effective as it could be, because the school has not assembled a fully coherent database across Years 7-11 to guide its work precisely. It now plans to do so as a matter of priority.

## Sixth form

73. In partnership with the local college of further education, the school provides students with access to a very wide range of courses. Students may choose from a list of up to 17 GCE AS- and A2-level courses, provided directly by the school as well as others available at the college under the *Ilkeston Venture* arrangements. In addition, college staff teach some courses at the school. All students have equal access to the courses offered. The statutory requirement to teach RE to all students is not met, as no time is allocated to teaching the programme of study specified in the local Agreed Syllabus. This deficiency was reported at the time of the last inspection and inadequate progress has been made in addressing the issue.
74. The sixth-form enrichment programme is restricted and unsatisfactory. This is largely because the desire to provide students with the widest range of examination courses, interlinked with the college, has in turn constrained internal timetabling flexibility. There are no enrichment courses. Limited provision is made through twice-termly “events”, involving visiting speakers and discussion of such topics as human rights. This is not enough to provide an adequate programme. The key skills course is unsatisfactory; it is not valued by students and inadequately coordinated with the subjects being studied.
75. There is no formal programme for careers education beyond a range of tutorial activities. Students are, however, offered the opportunity to visit local universities; some university staff visit the school for discussions. All students are expected to participate in a well-organised work experience for one week in Year 12. The careers library provides a good range of information for students about entrance to higher education and the world of work.
76. Sixth-form students participate in a modest range of activities organised outside the school day. For example, residential fieldwork visits are arranged in geography and science to Northumberland. Workshops are held in art and drama and students take part in local charity events. Courses are taught by well-qualified staff.
77. The accommodation provided by the school for the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Lessons are generally held in available classrooms in the main school, but the rooms provided specifically for the sixth form are generally small, outmoded and not equipped for specialist work. The sixth form area is in a state of disrepair. There is no adequate study centre for students to prepare work or research topics. The school library is inadequate and has few appropriate books.

## Care, guidance and support

The school gives good support, advice and guidance to pupils. The steps taken to ensure pupils' overall care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory; pastoral care is very good. The school satisfactorily seeks pupils' views and acts upon them. In the sixth form, students are usually well consulted.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils know that teachers value them very highly as individuals.
- The Behaviour Support programme is very effective with pupils most at risk of exclusion.
- The school introduces new pupils very well.
- The school has not done enough to ensure that its site is safe.

## Commentary

78. Through the tutorial system every pupil has a positive, trusting relationship with at least one adult in the school. On most days tutors spend substantial time with their forms – 30 minutes in the



morning and ten minutes in the afternoon. Form tutors and heads of year are well supported by their managers. Pupils have direct access to well-informed support and guidance. They know that their teachers value highly their development as individuals. The school itself rightly judges that tutors' skills require greater consistency, further training and still better management.

79. Arrangements for the induction of new pupils in Year 7 are very good, an aspect of the school that parents value very highly. In Years 9-11, pupils have good opportunities for impartial guidance from *Connexions* on further study or career opportunities. They have careers lessons, too – sound ones from their form tutors as part of PSHE, but generally unsatisfactory ones from the specialist careers programme.
80. The school makes a strong and successful effort to care for its most vulnerable pupils, particularly those most at risk of exclusion. It buys into a very valuable programme of Behaviour Support from its local education authority (LEA). A teacher from this service spends one day each week with these pupils, successfully developing their personal awareness, practical and social skills and self-esteem. The school's mentoring programme gives up to an hour's effective support each week to some 30 underperforming pupils. These initiatives result not only in a low level of exclusion from school, but also in promoting "inclusive" attitudes in both staff and pupils. The school creates in pupils a strong sense of belonging to a caring community.
81. The school complies well with all the procedures required for child protection. The school nurse and an assistant are directly available to pupils. The school is vigilant and takes note when individual pupils raise concern. It has not had to refer any pupils to outside agencies in recent years.
82. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its arrangements for involving pupils in the life of the school. Each year group elects its own year council and they in turn elect the School Forum. The provision of peer counseling and training for it arose from pupils' own desire to address the issue of bullying. Pupils also show awareness of some of the defects of provision on the site. At the forum meeting held during the week of inspection, they supported proposals to obtain a water dispenser and to provide benches so that pupils could sit outside during breaks and lunchtime – both very necessary and in short supply around the school.
83. The school successfully seeks and values pupils' views. It readily, for example, administered the standard pre-inspection questionnaire to sound out pupils' attitudes. Its consultative arrangements are now satisfactory. The school accepts that the next step is to offer pupils still more opportunities – as, for example, (with guidance) to chair and minute their own meetings.
84. Health and safety matters are in the hands of the newly appointed director of operations. The school complies with its LEA's guidance on off-site visits; teachers now follow new, stringent requirements for the approval of all school journeys. Procedures for assessment of risk on the school site are also in place. Since the last inspection, a secure fence has been installed around part of the perimeter, a big improvement.
85. There are, however, several health and safety matters that require very careful attention:
  - access to the site remains too open and Reception is poorly located;
  - deformed tarmac surfaces are dangerous on a main thoroughfare;
  - many outward-opening doors (with steps down) are a safety hazard;
  - access to fresh drinking water, in hygienic conditions, is extremely limited;
  - pupils' toilets do not have soap and are often smoke-filled; and
  - the school does not have a site development plan or a budget linked to it.

The school's senior management already has many of these issues listed for early resolution.

## Sixth form

86. Students feel well looked after. They are allocated to six tutor groups that thoughtfully comprise students from both Years 12 and 13 who are following similar courses. This arrangement allows form tutors to develop the knowledge and skills appropriate to the members of their group. Students receive good tutorial support through a planned programme of activities that includes appropriate advice and guidance about careers and opportunities in higher education.
87. Through its survey of last year's Year 13 students, the feedback received from the sixth form council and many informal consultations, the school seeks and gives value to, students' views. Students feel that they are treated fairly, that their teachers are readily accessible and that the student body as a whole is a friendly community. The school's beneficial association with the local college of further education is a considerable source of further support for students.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school is generally held in high regard by parents and the wider community. A good range of information is provided to parents about the school, but reports to parents about children's progress require improvement. The school's very good links with the nearby college of further education help to provide an attractive range of subjects for sixth formers.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- A sound range of information is issued to parents about the school and its activities.
  - Pupil *Planners* are generally well used for home-school dialogue.
  - The *Ilkeston Venture* provides a wide choice of sixth-form courses for students.
  - The school's close links with its community include performing arts and local business.
  - Written reports to parents are not specific enough about children's attainment and progress.
  - Links with primary schools and curricular information for parents are limited.
88. The school's links with parents and the wider community are satisfactory overall, with many good features. Parents and pupils like the school and believe that staff expect children to work hard and do their best. They consider that teaching is good. Parents are pleased with the progress their children make. An increasing number of parents are choosing the school for their children, creating over-subscription for the number of places available.
89. Good communications keep parents well informed about the school's activities and achievements. An attractive, informative termly magazine is now supplemented by a weekly newsletter, instituted by the new headteacher and warmly welcomed by parents. This newsletter provides regular updates of activities and emphasises the important role of parents in supporting their children's education.
90. Parents are informed of their children's progress in a suitable variety of ways. On "dialogue days" teachers discuss with pupils their progress and then share the targets set with parents. The pupils' *Planner* is used effectively for homework and home-school contact. Consultation evenings are well attended by parents. Written reports on pupils' progress and attitudes, however, do not give specific enough judgements about pupils' attainment and achievement and include too much jargon. About one third of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire did not feel well enough informed about their children's progress – an aspect on which there has been insufficient done since the last inspection.

91. The special educational needs coordinator has worked well to establish good relationships with parents of pupils with special educational needs. These parents are invited annually to an evening at which they are advised how they can help their children learn at home and about the provision the school makes. This meeting includes a buffet, at which parents can speak informally with school staff. As a result, nearly every parent attends the annual review for their child.
92. The school does not formally seek the views of the parents on issues that may affect them. It does, however, encourage parents to support their children's education through good conditions for homework and the *Planner*. Parents are encouraged to contact the school about any concerns – an offer that most parents say they would confidently accept. The induction of pupils into Year 7 is well organised and rated highly by parents. Useful curricular information is provided for some subjects, but the system is not fully coordinated or consistent across all year groups and subjects.
93. The school recognises the important role it plays in the community. The school hall, for example, is used by some local clubs and groups. School concerts attract large audiences from the wider community. Many pupils and students help with fundraising or visit hospitals and the elderly at home. Many local businesses accept pupils for work experience and some visit the school during careers week. There is scope for an extension of these links to enrich the school's curriculum.
94. The school has close links with some other schools and colleges, particularly at post-16 level. In recognition of the need to improve its links with contributory primary schools, it has recently appointed a Foundation Programme Manager. The school makes good use made of Transition Units in English, as pupils move from their primary Year 6 to secondary Year 7. All primary pupils spend time at the school before beginning their secondary education.

### **Sixth Form**

95. The return rate of the pre-inspection questionnaire for sixth formers was low, but those students who did respond were positive and complimentary about the school's provision. They enjoyed being in the sixth form at school. They felt that the teaching was challenging and that they were encouraged to study independently and research their topics. They agreed that their choice of courses suited their abilities and career plans.
96. The school, in conjunction with its further education partner, holds a sixth-form evening for Year 11 pupils and parents. Additional advice and counselling are offered. All the students interviewed in Year 12 considered that the process of selecting subjects was well handled.
97. Partnership and consortium arrangements with the South East Derbyshire College of Further Education greatly enhance the provision of post-16 education offered by the school's own sixth form. Students and parents are given good advice and counselling in the selection of sixth-form subjects.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall leadership of the school is good. The headteacher is an excellent leader. Senior and middle management are effective. The role of the supportive governing body is unsatisfactory, because it has not ensured that statutory requirements are met.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the new headteacher is excellent.

- The senior management team is effective and responds to new ideas.
- Middle management varies from very good to unsatisfactory and is effective overall.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. Its management is satisfactory.
- Governors have not dealt effectively with four of the key issues from the previous inspection or ensured that the school meets its statutory requirements.
- The school lacks a comprehensive system to evaluate its performance accurately.

## Commentary

98. The school has clearly stated aims and objectives that are translated effectively into action. Pupils not only achieve well academically, but also develop and mature rapidly as individuals. The vast majority of pupils like the school and what it stands for.
99. Governors are supportive of the school and committed to its welfare. They give freely of their time and energy. The overall governance of the school is, however, unsatisfactory. Under the previous administration, governors were supportive. They did not, however, play a fully active part in formulating policies or being a “critical friend” for the development of the school. They did not resolve all the major weaknesses highlighted at the last inspection nor have they ensured that all statutory provision is made for current pupils. Most of the latter infringements were highlighted six years ago.
100. The school does not meet the following statutory requirements:
- ICT is not taught sufficiently to all pupils in Years 10-11;
  - RE is not taught to pupils in Years 10-11 or the sixth form in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus;
  - a modern foreign language is not taught to all pupils in Years 7-11 and formal “disapplication” has not been made for those pupils who do not learn French; and
  - a daily act of collective worship is not provided for all pupils.
101. The new headteacher and the chair of governors have, however, quickly formed a productive partnership and intend that the governors will play a more active and focused role in the future.
102. The previous headteacher provided strong leadership. The experienced new headteacher has rapidly begun to build on these firm foundations to take the school still further forward. He has quickly provided an excellent level of strong, sensitive and inspirational leadership. These qualities are universally recognised and admired by the whole school community – adults, pupils and students alike. He is supported by dedicated, hard-working deputies. They have contributed significantly to the raised quality of pastoral care and classroom education since the last inspection and responded positively to the headteacher’s new ideas and strategies. The headteacher’s reassignment of roles within senior management has been welcomed by those involved for the new challenge it offers. The school faces the future with great optimism. As one teacher put it, “we are all pulling in the same direction”.
103. The school has a strong team of middle managers. They range in effectiveness from very good to unsatisfactory, but are good overall. They have successfully motivated both staff and pupils and have played a central part in raising both the attainment and achievement of pupils.
104. The school runs well, in the main, on a day-to-day basis. Key managers work with commitment for the good of the school. A lack of effective coordination of the major roles and responsibilities of key managers in the past has, however, led to some inconsistency, slowness or overlap in the development or implementation of whole-school policies. For example, although the school has

improved its tracking of pupils' progress considerably since 1998, it still does not have a coherent model or system to track accurately their progress over the whole of their time in school nor does it use all available data to judge the school's overall performance accurately. The roles of several senior staff in this aspect of work are not fully coordinated.

105. The performance management scheme has improved the standard of teaching. There are good opportunities for teachers to participate in training. These have helped staff to implement successful ways of raising the quality of teaching and learning. The staff training scheme is well organised, but does not extend to non-teaching staff. The induction scheme for newly qualified teachers is good, but that for other teachers new to the school is not well coordinated. Although administrative staff are effective and largely well deployed, there is no overall management of their roles.
106. The school spends well the money it receives for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching assistants for these pupils are good, but there are not enough of them. The school provides a good range of resources, including special computer programs to improve pupils' literacy and mathematics. The school now has a governor with designated oversight of the provision for these pupils, an improvement since the previous inspection.
107. The school has a broadly average income and expenditure. There are sound plans to reduce the deficit in the budget. In order to ensure more effective long-term planning, staff with responsibilities will have clearly identified budgets. This has already been established for the maintenance and refurbishment of the buildings and site. The school considers best value carefully in its spending. Bearing in mind its average income and its effectiveness in raising pupils' attainment and achievement, the school gives good value for money.

### **Sixth form**

108. The leadership of the sixth form is good and its management satisfactory. The school has, through its collaboration with the local college of further education, provided a positive climate for learning for students in Years 12 and 13. The links between the college and the school are generally managed well, although visiting lecturers and their students do not have the benefit of dedicated teaching rooms or extensive reference materials. The link arrangements do, however, benefit the student body considerably by providing a wider range of courses and more facilities than the school alone could provide. The school has a strong vision for the future development of this collaboration.
109. The performance of students is carefully monitored by the director of the sixth form; the school tracks well the progress that students make towards the targets that have been set for them. The director of the sixth form has sought the views of students by asking them to evaluate the quality of teaching in each subject they study. Although accommodation for sixth formers is scattered and sometimes in "temporary" buildings, senior management has succeeded in creating a distinctive, well-organised ethos and a friendly community. Students value the support and approachability of staff and enjoy their education here. The enthusiasm, wisdom and commitment of the director have achieved much.
110. There are, however, weaknesses in the management arrangements for the sixth form. The school does not normally keep attendance figures for the sixth form. Students are not expected to sign in and out of school to indicate their presence on site. As a result, the school does not have an effective means of tracking students' attendance or ensuring their welfare in an emergency. These weaknesses require sensitive, early resolution. The requirement of the Agreed Syllabus to teach RE in the sixth form is not met.

111. The income of the sixth form is a little above the average. Its costs are, however, greater than its income. As a result, the sixth form is not sufficiently cost-effective – despite the good experience it offers to students. The school has not investigated well enough how much the sixth form costs or how its cost-effectiveness can be improved. These, too, are important matters for senior management to address effectively.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,232,382
Total expenditure	3,149,717
Expenditure per pupil (11-16)	2,588

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-82,556
Balance carried forward to the next	34,786

# **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**

- The good progress made by most pupils in Years 7-11.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Teachers use assessment data effectively to monitor pupils' progress.
- The department is very ably led and managed.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of and enthusiasm for, the subject.
- The overall performance of boys in external examinations is not high enough.

#### **Commentary**

112. Over the period 1998-2002, the proportion of pupils reaching at least Level 5 in the Year 9 national tests has (with the exception of 2001) been around the national average. The highest result was in 2003. Girls perform significantly better than boys. Results at the higher Level 6 over the same period have been below average and in 2001-2003 were well below average. Pupils' overall achievement in English is, however, good because of their lowish starting point in Year 7. It is in line with that of pupils in similar schools. The performance of pupils in these tests has risen since the last inspection.
113. In GCSE English language in 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C was slightly above the national average. This represents a good achievement. The attainment of girls has been much higher than that of boys in the last two years. In 2001-2003, 59 per cent of pupils gained grades in the A\*-C range. The English language results are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. The percentage of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C for English literature was below the national average in 2002. In 2003, 70 per cent of candidates gained grades in the range A\*-C, a good achievement.
114. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard in different aspects of the subject is average. Most pupils read aloud accurately and with expression. In their close reading of texts, pupils use skimming and scanning strategies very effectively. This approach helps most pupils to identify key points and explain their significance soundly. A concentration on oral work and effective group work enables pupils to put together their own ideas before sharing them with the whole class. Pupils' achievement is limited when either teachers talk too much or when pupils give very short, sometimes one word, answers.
115. The standard of written work is about average overall. The planning and structuring of written tasks are usually done well. Pupils in a Year 7 class, for example, who were drafting letters to send back to their primary schools, recognised the importance of putting a key sentence at the beginning of each new paragraph. They then went on to write one into each paragraph of their draft letters, so improving the quality of their writing.

116. In a lower-attaining Year 9 class, pupils discussed life in domestic service through their study of Fiona Farrell's poem, *Charlotte O'Neil's Song*. Their understanding of social class was deepened as they recognised the significance of "You" and "I" in the line, *You rang your bell and I answered*. The sound overall quality of pupils' written work reflects the emphasis that teachers give to planning, presentation and handwriting. Pupils of all levels of ability make sound progress in Years 7-9. They are enthusiastic in lessons and want to learn.
117. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of attainment is broadly average. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The progress of high-attaining pupils is also good, because they reflect more readily and thoughtfully on how to craft their writing tasks and make explicit more subtle interpretations of language.
118. Pupils in a Year 10 class, studying Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*, deepened their understanding of the characters of Abigail and John Proctor, because they also considered carefully the political context in the USA at the time the play was written. A lower-attaining class of Year 10 pupils used their existing knowledge of textual analysis to hypothesise about the story line of Bill Forsyth's play, *Gregory's Girl*. They were particularly successful in considering the relationships between some of the characters.
119. Pupils' insights are often deepened by well-planned inputs from teachers. A low-attaining Year 11 class, by comparing the style and content of three poems, began to understand how the poets crafted their work. The teacher extended their insight considerably by highlighting examples of the use of narrative and figurative language.
120. Pupils' overall standard of writing is average by the end of Year 11. Assignments for GCSE are planned carefully by the majority of pupils and, when appropriate, incorporate literary references to support their points of view. The written work of higher-attaining pupils is generally analytical in style and carefully structured to convey clear points of view. Note-taking, presentation and the drafting of work tend to be better than often found. Spelling and punctuation are broadly average. Most pupils readily incorporate appropriate literary terminology, when discussing a writer's use of language, but are less secure in having probing, extended discussions.
121. The quality of teaching is good throughout Years 7-11. Lessons are generally planned carefully, include clear lesson objectives and unfold in line with the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. Sometimes, however, insufficient time is given in plenary sessions to consolidating work. Most teaching engages pupils' interest and attention. The careful assessment of pupils' work and close sharing of this information with classroom support teachers ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.
122. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department provides a clear sense of vision and the drive to consolidate and improve the subject. Data to track pupils' progress is carefully collated and used to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. The department's careful research and programmes to reduce the underachievement of boys have so far had limited success. The department has informal links with drama in Years 7-9 and recognises that these require strengthening.
123. A wide range of extra-curricular activities (including theatre trips, a film club, homework clubs and national poetry day celebrations) broaden the subject's positive contribution to pupils' social, cultural and moral development.



## Language and literacy across the curriculum

124. The standard of literacy seen in other subjects is average overall. Planning, note-taking, presentation and handwriting are good features of pupils' writing in art, geography, French, music and vocational courses. Pupils' accuracy when spelling and using punctuation is average overall, but could be better, in history.
125. Most pupils read aloud accurately, fluently and with expression. Understanding what is read is a strong feature in art. A library induction programme, beginning in Year 7, helps pupils considerably to know how to extract information when reading.
126. The quality of pupils' speaking and listening is average overall. Most pupils speak clearly and audibly. Opportunities for discussion are regularly planned into lessons. With the exception of art, mathematics and PE, sustained discussion is not a strong feature of oral work. The use of subject specific vocabulary is most evident in mathematics, art, geography and music.
127. The implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy has been managed well. A literacy working party is planning to make it still better. The intensive support given to pupils coming into Year 7 with a low standard of literacy does much to improve those pupils' linguistic skills. The 1998 inspection noted a weakness in pupils' literacy and oracy across the curriculum. Whilst these weaknesses have been addressed, the school wisely intends to raise standards of literacy further.

## Modern foreign languages

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's provision has narrowed since the last inspection to French only.
- Pupils often work productively in pairs and small groups.
- Pupils progress well in Years 7-9.
- Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 11, but could be higher.
- Teaching is not monitored and there is little consistency in practice.
- The best practices in the department are not identified, shared and universally promoted.
- Statutory requirements are not met; many pupils do not learn a modern foreign language.

## Commentary

128. In 2002, teachers assessed pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 9 as well above the national average. Standards were similar in 2003. Girls performed better than boys, but the gap between boys and girls was narrower than it was nationally. The 2002 GCSE results were in line with the national average. They were marginally lower in 2003. Girls performed better than boys and the gap between boys and girls was similar to that found nationally.
129. The evidence of the inspection is that the overall standard of current Year 9 pupils is just a little above average. Between Years 7 and 9, pupils achieve well. They develop a good level of skill in speaking, listening, reading and writing.
130. Pupils in Year 7, for example, can already count to 31 in French. They answer simple questions about themselves, such as when their birthday occurs. Year 8 pupils achieve particularly well; they can use the perfect tense, for instance, to describe an event that has happened – such as a

visit to Paris. Year 9 pupils have learned how to describe someone's physical features; in a lesson in which the teacher used French almost exclusively, they described the colour and type of hair of their classmates. This approach successfully enabled pupils to learn language in a realistic and "fun" environment.

131. During Years 7-9, most pupils with special educational needs are not included in learning French, so that they can take extra lessons in literacy. Some of them join French later, but their achievement is hindered by having missed important foundation work. Moreover, since French helps to make pupils more aware of how language is constructed and thereby develops their literacy, pupils with special educational needs do not benefit from this input.
132. The overall standard of work seen is average by the end of Year 11. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 answer an appropriate range of questions well in preparation for the GCSE examination. They say, for example, what the school rules are in French or even make up new ones! They talk competently about the cinema and the type of films they prefer. They usually speak only in short sentences, however and do not often speak or write at greater length, as a result of the limited tasks teachers give them.
133. Between Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement slows down. Pupils do not build enough on the good start they have made earlier in the school. The more able pupils, including those identified as gifted and talented, do not achieve well enough and are not gaining the highest (A\* and A) grades: only three pupils out of 77 in 2003, for instance, gained a GCSE grade higher than C. This underachievement is because they do not experience the opportunities and challenge needed to acquire a higher level of linguistic skill.
134. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers are competent; there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have adopted the structure of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. This helps them to set out clearly what pupils should achieve in a lesson. Teaching styles are inconsistent across the department, however and pupils have very different experiences. Whilst some teaching is entirely in French, other lessons are largely in English. The best opportunities are provided when pupils benefit from the first-hand experience of hearing and using French regularly.
135. Some teachers manage pupils very well. As a result, pupils in these classes are able to focus closely on their work. The regular use of assessment tests is helpful in Years 7-9, as it shows pupils what they have achieved. Some overuse of narrow testing in Years 10-11, together with an over-reliance on printed course materials, restricts opportunities for the kind of expressive language that pupils need to reach a higher linguistic level. In some lessons, teachers' explanations are too rapid and pupils are not given enough time to complete tasks.
136. Most pupils display sound attitudes to the subject. They learn well, when working in pairs or small groups. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good in Years 7-9, but only satisfactory overall in Years 10-11: when teaching is uninspiring, they tend to be listless or passive.
137. The management of the department is satisfactory. The department has gone through a difficult phase and the leadership is not clear enough about the future direction of the subject or how to bring about an improvement in standards or provision. Teaching is not monitored, with the result that the best classroom practices have not been identified, shared and actively promoted. The complementary roles of team members have not been developed. These aspects are unsatisfactory.

138. Resources for learning are good. Books are plentiful. There is good range and quality of audio-visual equipment in classrooms and satisfactory access to computers in the ICT suite.
139. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved, but many pupils still do not learn a modern foreign language, so that the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements. German has been phased out since the last inspection, further limiting the modern languages curriculum. Modern foreign languages are now not offered in the school's sixth form. Extra-curricular provision is poor. There are, for example, no extended visits to France, exchanges, clubs, links with businesses or special events (such as Europe week). This lack of opportunity does not prepare pupils well enough for their future in Europe and the world of work.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The overall standard of work in Years 10 and 11 is average and improving.
  - GCSE results are close to average.
  - Teaching is often very imaginative.
  - Good leadership and management are now driving the department forward.
  - There is too little good (or better) teaching in Years 7 and 8.
  - Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
140. National test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average in 2002. This represented satisfactory achievement, when compared with pupils' previous performance in primary school and good achievement when set alongside most pupils in schools of a similar kind. In recent years, results have been close to the national average. Pupils attain slightly higher in mathematics than in English or science. Test results in 2003 were only marginally below those of 2002.
141. In 2002, GCSE results were below the national average. Girls' results were in line with girls' performance nationally, but boys' were well below those nationally for boys, giving below average results for the whole year group. In 2003, the rising overall trend of recent years continued: girls' results were sustained, but boys' performance remained at the lower level of 2002 and was noticeably lower than in 2000 and 2001. The overall picture in 2003 was still a little below the 2002 national average.
142. Work seen during lessons confirms that pupils in Year 9 perform at an overall standard that is in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory progress from their Year 7 entry. The most able pupils work enthusiastically and accurately – as, for example, when “rounding” numbers to a sensible degree of accuracy. They clearly understand the purpose of this process, using it well to make estimates of the answers to difficult multiplication questions. They also exhibit deep understanding of the effect that multiplying and dividing by negative numbers and fractions has on a range of starting values. Most pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. When they are supported by learning assistants, they make good progress. Most, for instance, can multiply single-digit numbers accurately in their heads and then add small numbers to the new answer.
143. Some Year 9 pupils of just above average ability make much better progress than others. In an imaginative lesson about scale factor, pupils were immediately enthused by the teacher's

introduction about maps. They then showed a good understanding of scaling to plan furniture for rooms in a house. In a lesson on ratio, however, an equivalent class produced almost no work. In this case, the good behaviour and attitudes seen in most lessons degenerated into poor behaviour. This was because the teacher talked for too long, did not manage the class adequately and posed questions that required little thought. The result was that one class achieved consistently well, whilst the other achieved little.

144. Pupils at all levels of ability achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 11. From their average attainment at the end of Year 9, all classes achieve the expected standards. In an imaginative Year 11 lesson, pupils of just above average ability learned very well from their mistakes. They studied carefully how well they achieved when solving different types of equations and then chose further worksheets for suitable practice. Because the sheets contained examples already worked out (and some with deliberate mistakes), the pupils became skilled at spotting errors. Almost all other Year 11 pupils now make good progress. Because many had fallen behind with their work in Year 10, however, through (now resolved) inadequacies in teaching, the achievement of most pupils since Year 9 is satisfactory rather than good.
145. Teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the school. Some teaching is very good and highly original – as, for example, when stimulating discussion, relating work to the real world and encouraging pupils in their self-assessment. Lessons are at their best in Year 11. This is particularly because relationships are stronger and the focus of work is on preparation for mock examinations.
146. Much teaching is, however, no more than satisfactory. This is particularly true of teaching in Years 7 and 8. Those lessons that are below a good standard are characterised by teachers talking too much, posing only simple questions or, as in one poor lesson, by poor class control. All teachers ensure that key mathematical terms are used correctly. There is, however, not enough extended writing that allows pupils to explore answers by methods other than discussion.
147. Leadership and management are good and improving. New teachers have been given useful help. Teachers have been carefully matched to classes; this is helping many pupils to regain an interest in the subject after periods of previous weak teaching. The head of department is an innovative teacher and has a strong vision of how the subject should be taught. She is very ably supported by the second in department, who is also a very good teacher. The very good practice seen in some lessons has not, however, been sufficiently inculcated in some other teaching, despite efforts to track individual teachers' performance and pupils' progress.
148. The grouping arrangements (by level of attainment) in Years 10 and 11 help teachers to target work more accurately than in Years 7-9. Accommodation is inadequate. Some lessons, particularly those with younger pupils, are not in specialist rooms and pupils (often the least able) are occasionally taught in two different rooms that are both away from the main departmental area. Some pupils find it difficult to remember where they should be. Movement around these rooms (such as the music room) is restricted. Morale in the department is sound and rising. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

149. In most other subjects, pupils use numerical skills at the level usually found. They receive many opportunities in art and in design and technology to measure, estimate and work on shape and size. In a Year 8 food technology class, for example, pupils had a good understanding of the purpose of different types of bar graphs. In science, geography and ICT, pupils regularly draw graphs and handle data adequately. There is little evidence of mathematical skills being exercised in other areas.

150. Whilst there have been three training days for all teachers and written guidance to different departments about the possible uses of mathematics, there is no formal tracking of what happens in lessons. The head of mathematics is occasionally asked to offer guidance about the use of mathematics, particularly in science and French.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall throughout the school.
- The department is improving the subject and its teaching.
- Teaching insufficiently, however, ensures that pupils learn actively.
- Assessment is not used enough to let pupils know how well they are doing.
- Accommodation is not up to modern standards.

### Commentary

151. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their overall attainment is slightly below the national average. In the Year 9 national tests over the last four years, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above has been close to the national average, but that reaching the higher Level 6+ has been below average. These results are in line with those of similar schools.

152. Pupils in Years 10 -11 study GCSE double-award science. One class in Year 11 is following a pilot scheme for a GCSE dual-award applied science. In 2002, GCSE results were close to average. They were slightly lower in 2003. Girls have done better than boys for the last two years. Pupils have tended to perform worse in science than they do in most of their other subjects. When compared with those of similar schools, the results in 2001 and 2002 represented a good achievement for the department.

153. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is close to, but a shade below, average. Pupils enjoy practical work – as they do throughout the school – and readily acquire new skills. In many lessons there is a large amount of practical work and learning is often fun. Pupils handle equipment safely and correctly.

154. In one Year 7 lesson, for instance, pupils focused microscopes quickly and viewed their specimens carefully. They were awe-struck by the micro-world they had entered for the first time. The lesson was particularly successful because of the teacher's careful preparation of slide specimens and precise instructions on using microscopes. In a high-attaining Year 9 class, pupils assessed the position of a range of metals in a table of reactivity, based on the displacement of metals from salt solutions and successfully argued out their relative positions in the table.

155. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall attainment is close to the national average. Their standard of work reflects the lower level they had on intake. Higher-attaining pupils achieve a good standard, because they are prepared to work hard and receive strong encouragement from their teachers. There is still, however, room for many of them to acquire greater depth of knowledge and understanding through more demanding questioning and debate.

156. In some lessons in Years 10-11, mini-presentations and role-play enable pupils to explore their views and understanding thoroughly on scientific issues. Pupils relish these activities, but there are not enough of them. The necessary higher standards partly depend on teachers consolidating more

thoroughly what pupils learn from experiments and discussion. Pupils in the Year 11 applied science class feel they benefit considerably from the out-of-school experiences they have at hospitals, a fire station and local companies.

157. In Years 7-9, pupils make satisfactory progress. Most progress soundly in Years 10 -11. They generally work hard and their behaviour is usually good. They have good relationships with their peers and teachers. A small number of boys in the lower-attainment sets of Years 8 and 9, however, are too easily distracted and prone to chatter. The department is experimenting well with different ways of organising classes; it is trying hard to resolve the differences in achievement between the sexes and amongst pupils of different levels of attainment.
158. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress. The progress of some pupils is, however, hampered by insufficient in-subject support. This is a particular problem in Years 7-9. Weaker pupils are insufficiently helped, for example, to structure their writing to clear frameworks. At times, a few boys with weak literacy behave poorly and learning support assistants have to spend too much time calming them down.
159. A contributory factor to pupils' sound overall progress is the good quality of teaching. Two-thirds of the lessons seen were judged to be good (or very good) and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The best lessons had very detailed planning, carefully timed sequences of activities, a suitable variety of exposition, shared objectives, incisive question-and-answer sessions and regular summaries of work covered on the board.
160. There are, however, weaknesses in teaching. Salient scientific words are seldom listed on the board for specific lessons nor are those for topics always displayed clearly on laboratory walls. Insufficient time is spent checking that pupils thoroughly understand scientific vocabulary and terms – by, for example, searching questioning and follow-up. Mathematics is fostered and used less than normally seen – although, where observed, pupils manipulated data in equations and formulae satisfactorily. Students' graph work often lacks sufficient attention to detail and accuracy. In no lessons were ICT or video sequences used to enliven and illustrate topics.
161. The leadership and management of the department are good. Half of the department's ten teachers have been appointed in the last four terms. They are well supported. The department has a thorough system for analysing pupils' attainment, but does not explain it enough to pupils. The department's seven laboratories, in three locations, are outmoded. Attractive displays of work lift the learning climate and present science as an exciting subject. The technicians provide efficient, effective support. The department has sufficient textbooks and equipment. Links with the principal contributory primary schools are thin. Since the last inspection, there has been satisfactory progress in all aspects of the department's work.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has a good supply of computers.
- The computer system is well managed by skilful technicians.
- Teaching is not good enough.
- The requirements of the National Curriculum are not met for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Parents are not given enough information about the achievement of their children.

## Commentary

162. Pupils' overall level of attainment on entry to the school is below average. Their ICT skills remain below average by the end of Year 9. Girls achieve higher standards than boys. In 2002, teachers' assessments showed that an average proportion of pupils reached the standards expected. Only a very small proportion reached a higher level. These proportions fell in 2003. The school does not enter pupils for GCSE in the subject. The standard of work from pupils by the end of Year 11 is also below the national average.
163. Most pupils in Year 9 use a word-processing package to present work well. They test simple models, using a spreadsheet and search the Internet satisfactorily. Most pupils do not plan their work well. Many lack the confidence to use computers independently. They do not appreciate that they can try out ideas very readily; they are too wary of making a mistake, not realising they can easily try another method, if their first idea does not work. In consequence, they need to seek regular reassurance from their teacher. Very few pupils are able to evaluate their work in any detail. They may, for example, say something is "good", but are then unable to give a reason for this judgement. The standards reached by the end of Year 9 represent unsatisfactory achievement.
164. There is no coordination of the ICT work undertaken by pupils in Years 10 and 11 and no planned ICT course for all pupils. Consequently, there is no planned development of ICT capability in these years. Some pupils (such as those taking GNVQ courses) do acquire the necessary skills. Many others, at best, only practise what they already know and, at worst, make no use of computers whatsoever. The school does not record the ICT experiences of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Achievement in these years is unsatisfactory.
165. Overall, achievement is unsatisfactory. The highest-attaining pupils achieve slightly less progress than the bulk of pupils. This is because they are very rarely given challenging work. In a Year 9 class, for example, nearly every pupil experienced great difficulty in writing a program to control the heaters in a greenhouse. One pupil successfully completed this task very quickly, but then had nothing to do for a long time.
166. Similarly, lower-attaining pupils achieve less than others, because work is not modified to meet their needs. For example, those pupils in Year 8 who were not able to "cut and paste" material were expected to take data from the Internet to use in a spreadsheet. They could not accomplish this task. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory, because teachers do not respond sufficiently to their requirements. Often, they cannot read or understand written handouts well enough. There are no teaching assistants in ICT to help them.
167. Not every pupil in Years 7-9 has weekly homework. Homework is set satisfactorily – as, for example, in the form of research to prepare for the next lesson. Many pupils regularly make good use of computers in their own time (in some cases, up to an hour before school) for work in many subjects. One example was to find out about thermoplastics for resistant materials. At lunchtimes, sixth-form students provide good support to younger pupils. Some pupils stay after school to use computers.
168. Although pupils using computers in their own time show positive attitudes towards their work, attitudes in lessons are unsatisfactory overall. Many pupils display a lack of interest in the work and make little effort. Many take too long to start work. In general, girls are more attentive than boys; this explains why more of them reach the expected standard. In some cases, lack of interest leads to unsatisfactory behaviour. This sometimes takes the form of not paying attention to the teacher, but a small minority of pupils disrupt the work of others.

169. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. It was a cause for concern at the previous inspection and remains so. Unsatisfactory teaching leads to unsatisfactory learning. This is the reason why pupils do not achieve as much as they should. In Years 7-9, teaching was unsatisfactory in a high proportion of the lessons observed. Teachers do not take sufficient account of what pupils can do, when planning work. In each class, pupils have a wide range of attainment. Teachers do not ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged by the work set.
170. In too many lessons, pupils are not told what they will be doing. Even when pupils are told what they will be learning, it is very rare for them to appreciate why they are learning particular topics. This results in a loss of motivation and limits their assessment of how well they are doing. In too many lessons, unsatisfactory behaviour is ignored by teachers or not checked quickly enough. Even when pupils receive a spoken evaluation of their work from the teacher, it is not regularly recorded. Consequently, pupils cannot evaluate their progress over time.
171. Reports to parents do not give sufficient information about their child's achievement. They do not record what has been learned – as distinct from what has been covered in lessons. Targets for improvement are frequently too vague to be helpful. Parents of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive a report on their child's attainment and progress in ICT. They should do so.
172. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is unsatisfactory, because there is no overall planning. Skills cannot be developed in a systematic way. Inefficiencies sometimes arise when a teacher assumes a skill that pupils do not have. In a small proportion of lessons, teachers make good use of ICT – as, for instance, when GNVQ entry-level students used the Internet to research local businesses and then recorded their findings on computers.
173. Literacy and numeracy receive satisfactory attention. Pupils make some use of technical vocabulary and have suitable opportunities for writing. Pupils in a Year 7 class, for example, assessed the suitability of different pictures as illustrations. Pupils apply their mathematics satisfactorily, when they use simple formulae in spreadsheets.
174. Unsatisfactory leadership and management have led to poor improvement since the previous inspection. At that time, the school was not delivering the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11. This continues to be the case. The school has plans to rectify this from September 2004 – far too long after it was brought to the school's attention. Teaching remains unsatisfactory and standards have not risen.
175. There are sufficient staff to teach the subject. The school has a good computer network and a higher than average number of computers. These are well managed by technicians. The technical team has extended the school's provision very cost-effectively. Because technical expertise is high, problems can be swiftly rectified. Other than in abnormal circumstances, there is sufficient technical support for the network.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

176. Pupils make good use of computers in some subjects. In music, ICT is used very imaginatively; computer-aided demonstrations help younger pupils to learn to play a keyboard, whilst pupils taking GCSE use professional programs to score their compositions. In art, pupils use computers well to work with video-recorded images. Computer-aided design packages are used well in design and technology. In English, pupils use computers in at least one topic every year. In other subjects (such as science and history) insufficient use is made of computers.
177. Nearly all teachers have the necessary computer skills for their subject. Training continues to provide the necessary skills for new demands and suitable support for the small minority of teachers



with an insufficient level of computer skills. Teaching assistants have at least sufficient ICT skill to support pupils effectively.

178. The school's provision for the educational use of ICT across all subjects is unsatisfactory, because it is not planned or monitored. In consequence, when contemplating using computers, teachers do not know what skills pupils have. For the same reason, the school does not know whether the use of computers across the curriculum is developing skills or just providing practice. This information is essential for Years 10 and 11, because cross-curricular use is the only means by which most pupils learn ICT.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Departmental leadership provides a clear sense of direction.
- Effective assessment procedures clearly show pupils how to improve their work.
- The scheme of work for Years 7-9 is well written, with good opportunities for fieldwork.
- Higher-attaining pupils are not stretched enough.
- There is insufficient support for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is not enough teaching time in Years 7-9.

#### Commentary

179. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the national average. When teachers originally assessed pupils' work in 2002 at the end of Year 9, their results suggested that the overall standard was above average. This was corrected by subsequent assessment, however, to average. This average standard was maintained in 2003 and agrees with the inspection judgement.
180. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of attainment is average. In the GCSE examination of 2002, results were broadly in line with the national average. Fewer pupils than nationally, however, reached the highest standards. Girls achieved higher results than boys. The 2003 results were below those of 2002. The overall standard of attainment seen during the inspection was average.
181. By the end of year 9, pupils have a good knowledge of such topics as natural hazards. In Year 8, they understand how volcanoes are formed and their effects on people. Pupils have good knowledge of a small number of places, such as Japan; in Year 9, for instance, one group used data effectively to draw graphs and accurately compare the climate in two contrasting parts of Japan. They read maps well in Year 7 and understand the use of scale, direction and symbols. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of geographical terms, but only higher-attaining pupils use them effectively.
182. By the end of Year 11, pupils have a sound knowledge of the main features of landscapes, such as rivers and earthquakes. They have a good understanding of geographical models and use them effectively – as, for example, to describe the use of the land in Ilkeston. Pupils have a good knowledge of examples of the geographical features they describe and their correct geographical

names. In one lesson, for example, pupils accurately described and explained the main features of the River Tees. Higher-attaining pupils carry out research tasks well, understand the methods of fieldwork enquiry and analyse data effectively. Written work is accurate, but the work of a minority of pupils is brief, lacks detail and includes few geographical terms.

183. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons from Years 7 to 11. They are well motivated and work hard. They steadily increase their knowledge about places in the world and how landscape features are formed. As a result, they maintain a satisfactory level of achievement, given their below average starting-point in Year 7. A significant minority of pupils (mainly boys) do not achieve as well as they should. This is because they have a short attention span and do not complete work carefully and in sufficient detail.
184. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7-9, good in Years 10-11 and satisfactory overall. Lessons start promptly. Teachers are well prepared and organised, so that pupils settle to work quickly. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. They use it effectively to provide clear explanations, lead well-structured discussions and gain pupils' interest with well-chosen illustrations. The objectives of lessons are set out clearly at the start of lessons, but are rarely used to assess the progress made at the end. Lessons are well structured. They have a lively starter activity, a variety of appropriate activities and incorporate a range of well-chosen resources. The result is that pupils quickly become involved in lessons.
185. In some lessons in Years 10-11, teachers use imaginative methods to capture pupils' interest and curiosity. In one such lesson in Year 11, the teacher used a large tray of water, rocks, feathers and material to simulate the pollution caused by an oil spill. As a result, pupils were highly motivated, worked very hard and quickly gained a good depth of knowledge and understanding.
186. Teachers quickly establish a brisk pace and an industrious working atmosphere, so that pupils work hard and are well behaved. In a minority of lessons in Years 7-9, when a slowish pace is set and pupils are not sufficiently stimulated, the teacher is required to intervene and ensure that all pupils maintain their concentration.
187. Pupils cooperate with one another effectively in groups and pairs, as class work is well structured and organised. The work provided for pupils with special educational needs tends not to be closely matched to their specific requirements, although most make satisfactory progress. They are fully involved in lessons. The achievement of higher-attaining pupils is satisfactory. Teachers do not, however, develop enough depth of understanding in these pupils or challenge them sufficiently – as, for example, through rigorous questions or specifically designed materials.
188. The department is well led. It has a clear sense of direction and an appropriate focus on raising standards. The scheme of work for Years 7-9 is well written. Well-structured opportunities for fieldwork and ICT are included throughout Years 7-11. Marking is thorough. The system of assessment is well thought out. It enables pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers' assessment of the levels attained is, however, too optimistic. There are sufficient books and equipment of good quality. Children's progress in geography (as is also the case in history and RE) is not reported to parents as a separate subject, as it statutorily should be, but only as part of a humanities report.
189. Not enough time is allocated to teach the subject in Years 7-9. The organisation of humanities has weaknesses; geography is taught in blocks of time, separated by periods when no geography is taught, in Years 7 and 8. As a result, staff teach their specialism for only part of the time and the course is disjointed. Additionally, there is not enough time to teach the National Curriculum in enough detail. This problem was identified at the time of the last inspection: inadequate progress

has been made in resolving this issue. The department itself has made a satisfactory response to the last report and standards have improved.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers manage pupils well and expect pupils to behave well.
- Most pupils have a positive attitude to their work.
- In some lessons teachers do not provide pupils with enough structure for their work.
- The low teaching time and fragmented timetable for Years 7-9 lower standards.

### Commentary

190. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is broadly in line with that expected nationally. In 2001 and 2002, teachers assessed their pupils' work at the end of Year 9 as being in line with the national average; fewer pupils than nationally, however, were judged to reach the highest standards. In 2003, there was a significant decline in attainment. This was partly attributable to the extended absence of an experienced teacher. The standard of work seen during the inspection was average, but relatively few pupils reach very high standards. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
191. Most pupils in Years 7-9 have sound knowledge and understanding of the past. They usually recall adequately work done in previous lessons. This means that teachers can readily move on to new work. Most pupils explain the reasons for events in the past satisfactorily. High attainers in Year 9, for example, understood well why men joined the armed forces enthusiastically in 1914. Pupils see differences between the past and the present, although they tend to make generalised statements, on the assumption that all people in the past lived similar lives. They make valid deductions from sources of evidence, but only the highest attainers assess their reliability and validity well.
192. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 11 has improved over the past three years. The 2003 GCSE results were an improvement on those of 2002, although still below average. This improvement was largely due to the very high attainment of girls. Although the department has made efforts to improve boys' attainment, it has remained at a below-average standard. The department has had some success in targeting the attainment of pupils whose work was on the borderline of a C grade and ensuring that they did reach that standard.
193. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall standard is close to average. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have sound knowledge of the topics they study. The knowledge of a significant minority is, however, patchy and sometimes inaccurate. Some pupils in Year 11, for example, were unable to explain the term "crash", when used in the context of the Wall Street Crash. Lower attainers generally do not have a good grasp of how to assess whether or not a historical source is reliable. The written work from high attainers is of above average quality and shows a very good understanding of their work.
194. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and throughout the school. Most work hard and achieve satisfactorily. Both their behaviour and attitude to work are usually good. A minority, who have poorer attitudes and short concentration spans, do not achieve as well as they should, because they ignore their teachers' frequent reminders about working rather than chattering. This was noticeable in three groups in Years 10 and 11, in which a significant number of pupils

(largely boys) were disinclined to concentrate on their work. This inattention contributes to their lower attainment in examinations.

195. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and occasionally very good. It is occasionally unsatisfactory. Teachers are confident in their subject. They manage pupils well and set high expectations of behaviour and hard work. Not all pupils respond as well as they should. Where the teaching was very good, it was enthusiastic, stimulated pupils' interest and curiosity, very effectively used ICT and provided artifacts for pupils to handle and discuss.
196. In some lessons, however, teachers assumed that they had given pupils enough guidance on the work they were asked to do. This was not always the case. In some lessons the work lacked sufficient structure. Pupils were, for instance, not told what to look for when asked to watch a short film extract. Teachers do not use the board often enough to record instructions or the key points of lessons, so that pupils will remember them. In lessons with Year 9, teachers covered work at a fairly superficial level. This was largely the result of a lack of time to develop work fully.
197. The low amount of time allocated to history in Years 7-9 limits the variety of teaching methods teachers can use and lowers both the attainment and progress of most pupils and especially of high attainers. The problem is compounded in Years 7 and 8 by the time for history being organised in blocks of six or seven weeks, alternating with geography and RE. This means that pupils have a period of around 13 weeks without any history lessons. This issue was identified as a weakness in the two previous inspections. The school now needs to sort the problem out effectively and quickly.
198. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department has built up a team that has successfully raised the overall standards at GCSE. The department does not, however, have a clear vision of how it might improve further in the future.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject and the GCSE course is popular.
- Good teaching on the GCSE course enables pupils to achieve well.
- Most other teaching engages pupils' interest, but is not demanding enough.
- Pupils have little idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- The statutory programme of study is not taught to pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The subject has not improved since the last inspection.

### **Commentary**

199. By the end of Year 9, pupils reach the standard expected. They know that, although different religions have different beliefs, they also have beliefs in common. They understand that religious beliefs can make an enormous difference to people's lives. They also know that people express their beliefs in different ways.
200. By the end of Year 11, however, most pupils are well below the standard that the Agreed Syllabus expects. Pupils follow a course of personal and social education rather than religious education. As a result, they do not get beyond the level of attainment in religious thought that they had reached at the end of Year 9. In addition to the statutory provision, some pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE course in religious studies. Overall, examination results in

recent years have been average and close to pupils' results in other subjects. Boys' results, however, have been well below the national average and are declining.

201. Pupils' achievement in Years 7-9 is satisfactory. In most lessons, pupils make steady progress. In Year 7, for example, they study theism and learn to distinguish between religious and scientific thinking. They compare and contrast the doctrine of creation and the theory of evolution. In Year 8, they learn about the caste system in Hinduism and deepen their understanding of the features shared by different religions. In Year 9, pupils pursue beliefs about salvation in Christianity and Buddhism. Pupils' progress is no better than satisfactory during these years, because most of the teaching is by non-specialist teachers whose own knowledge is modest.
202. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is poor, because the programme of study they follow does not match the requirements of the *Agreed Syllabus*. Achievement on the GCSE course, in contrast, is good. Pupils make rapid progress in response to good teaching. As a result, the proportion of pupils predicted to achieve grades A\*-C in 2004 has risen from one in three to one in two.
203. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7-9. Teachers plan lessons well and share their clear learning objectives with pupils. They engage pupils' interest, secure positive attitudes and achieve high standards of behaviour. The recurring weakness, however, is the lack of depth and detail in teachers' own knowledge and understanding of RE. Teachers sometimes misspell important words such as "Qur'an" and "crucifixion" and the level of intellectual demand is not high enough for pupils to make good progress.
204. In Years 10-11, the teaching would be judged good (and at times very good), if the lessons were for personal and social education. An absence of reference to Christianity, to any other religion or to religious belief and practice and the lack of opportunity for pupils to explore and express their own point of view, make for unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching and learning on the GCSE course, however, are good. Here, pupils recognise that the teaching about Sikhism, for instance, has authority and conviction and this enables them to grasp the necessary detail with precision.
205. The head of department inspires and enthuses not only pupils but also other teachers, all non-specialists. As a result, pupils have generally positive attitudes to the subject. Pupils on the GCSE course are very positive and the course is increasing in popularity. The curriculum in Years 7-9 is good; it has the right balance between direct study of specific religions and the thematic study of religion. The lack of specialist teaching, however, in Years 7 and 8 particularly, but also in other years, is unsatisfactory.
206. In Years 10-11, pupils who are not on the GCSE course do not receive their statutory entitlement to RE. Even if they were taught the correct content, the amount of time allocated (about half the minimum specified) would be unlikely to allow pupils to make adequate progress with some intellectually demanding units of work. The assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory and the end-of-unit tests are insufficiently related to the levels of attainment of the syllabus. Pupils have little grasp of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
207. The development plan for the humanities faculty omits reference to the subject's non-compliance and the governing body wrongly asserts that the statutory requirements for RE are fully in place. There has not been enough improvement since the last inspection. Overall leadership within the department, faculty and school have been unsatisfactory. It is an urgent and long-overdue task for the school to put the subject back on the rails.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall standard in the subject is well above average.
- Teaching and learning are of very good quality.
- Assessment procedures are impressively thorough.
- Departmental leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive insufficient support in lessons.

#### Commentary

208. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard of work is above average. In 2002, teachers' formal assessments of pupils' work indicated that more pupils reached the national benchmark of Level 5 than the proportion nationally. An above average proportion of pupils also reaches the higher Level 6. Girls attain higher than boys overall.
209. In GCSE in 2002, pupils gained a well above average proportion of grades A\*-C and A\*-G. In the past three years there has been an upward trend in performance. This was maintained in 2003 and a big improvement occurred in pupils' work with resistant materials. Pupils in this subject performed significantly better than they did in most of their other school subjects.
210. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have good skill in drawing and design. This is largely owing to the emphasis that teachers place each year on all pupils having graphics experience. The majority of pupils use computers efficiently for word processing, research, data-display and design. In food, they confidently research, design and modify recipes. In resistant materials, pupils work well, using a range of materials that includes acrylic and metal. As a result of the very good assessment procedures and the emphasis on target-setting for improvement, all pupils have a clear view of how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve further.
211. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard is well above average. Most pupils know clearly what is required of them and have the motivation to succeed. Care in choosing tasks and a pride in achievement underpin the work in resistant materials – as, for example, when pupils make models in cardboard before developing designs for CD-racks or clocks. In food, pupils use computers well to research and analyse the nutritional content of foodstuffs before producing well-balanced recipes. Graphics students confidently use different projections to display their ideas and often skillfully render the final designs in colour. Written work is very well presented in all aspects of the subject. Pupils have adequate mathematical skills for the tasks they undertake.
212. Teaching is good overall. It is always at least satisfactory, was good (or better) in well over three-quarters of the lessons seen and is very good overall in Years 10-11. This is a very effective team. They support one another well. Pupils are encouraged to be independent – for instance, through the selection and ordering of materials from the technician. Teachers' expectations are high. The system of assessing pupils' work is used well as a tool to raise achievement. This was particularly effective in a Year 11 lesson see;: pupils suddenly realised why certain aspects of their work were important for examination purposes. They subsequently approached their work with a new sense of purpose.

213. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The faculty leader provides a very good role model as a teacher. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good; standards have improved, computer provision is better and food rooms have been refurbished. As in the previous report, a small number of lower attainers are too reliant on their teachers' evaluation of their work. This, combined with a lack of learning support for some pupils who need it, deflects teachers from using their valuable time in other ways. The need for more ICT facilities, including interactive whiteboards, is widely recognised.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' overall standard of work is well above average by the end of Year 11.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Some teachers do too much for pupils.
- Provision for and the use of, ICT is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

214. The overall standard of work is above average by the end of Year 9 and well above it by the end of Year 11. Pupils' level of achievement, taking into account their average overall standard on entry to the school, is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10-11.
215. In GCSE in 2002, pupils gained a well above average proportion of grades A\*-C and A\*-G. Examination results have steadily improved over the past three years. Pupils did significantly better in this subject than in most of their other subjects. This pattern has continued into 2003.
216. By the end of Year 9, most pupils show increasing confidence in using the formal elements of line, tone, texture and colour. They noticeably deepen their knowledge of artists. They acquire the skill to work with a range of materials that includes printmaking, textiles and *papier mache*. They understand and use technical language relevant to their areas of study. Sketchbooks show careful research and the thoughtful development of ideas. Pupils (including those with special educational needs) enjoy art and thrive, because teachers have high expectations, good subject knowledge and clearly communicate the quality aimed for. The work of a local artist has had a significant impact on the sculpture produced.
217. By the end of Year 11, pupils have extended their knowledge and understanding, honed their skills and started to apply their artistic ideas to real life - such as by designing artefacts and textiles for a contemporary hotel. Very good team teaching, by staff from the school and the local college of further education, ensures that higher- and middle-attaining pupils achieve well with the resources available to them. These pupils are well motivated and speak clearly when making formal presentations of their ideas – as, for example, when evaluating one another's work.
218. Those who are both lower attainers and lack first-hand experience of traditional or contemporary hotels, however, only partially understand the task. They also find it difficult to visualise possible solutions to the problem facing them. Inadequate ICT and audio-visual equipment prevent

teachers from offering relevant information. One pupil for example, who was designing a water feature, was unaware that these features could be located inside, as well as outside, hotels.

219. Teaching ranges from good to outstanding and is very good overall. It is more varied in Years 7-9 than in Years 10-11. A strength of the teaching lies in teachers' different specialisms. Schemes of work are flexible enough to capitalise on these skills, so enriching pupils' experiences. On occasions, teachers do too much for pupils; although this leads to successful results, it restricts pupils' opportunities to learn with independence.
220. The subject leader has a very clear vision for art and design. She manages one of the most successful departments in the school. Links with the local further education college, artists and craftspeople are excellent and greatly enhance pupils' experience. Assessment procedures are very good in Years 10-11, but (although good) are not as sharp as they could be in Years 7-9. One of the art rooms is inadequate and limits the range of sculptural activities that can be undertaken. All art rooms need refurbishing. The ICT provision is inadequate. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection in improving standards, the quality of teaching, assessment practices and pupils' literacy. The concern about ICT remains.

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The achievement of most pupils is good.
- Most pupils show a strong interest in the subject.
- Well-paced, encouraging teaching is a strength.
- A minority of pupils readily stray off the tasks set for them.

### **Commentary**

221. Drama is taught throughout the school. Three lessons were sampled. The overall standard of work is average by the end of Years 9 and 11. In 2002, 71 per cent of the pupils who were entered for the GCSE examination gained grades in the range A\*-C, a good result. The proportion was slightly lower in 2003, at 64 per cent of the pupils entered.
222. Pupils quickly understand the techniques and approaches of the subject, as a result of strong, clear, supportive and well-paced teaching. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils came into class quietly, attentively and eager to begin. They rapidly grasped the meaning of first and third person narrative, aided substantially by the teacher's humorous, vocal illustrations around the story of Cinderella.
223. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils understood well the significance of space, distance and symbolism, partly as a result of the varied activities provided and the excellent exploration and discussion of their perceptions. In a Year 11 lesson on the holocaust, pupils improvised sensitively in a "cattle truck" and explored their feelings very thoughtfully.
224. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are positive throughout the school. Most pupils concentrate and move into roles very quickly, but sometimes (as in the Year 10 lesson) a significant minority of pupils are easily distracted and consequently make insufficient progress.



225. The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good. Its strongest features are thorough planning, direct teaching, close interaction with pupils and a brisk pace. Teachers move round groups quickly, encouraging pupils, establishing a group ethos, clarifying pupils' approaches and pushing them to think about their work. The subject is well led and managed. Schemes of work are up to date. Assessment, especially for the GCSE examination, is rigorously carried out. Links between English and drama require strengthening.

## Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good overall.
- Pupils' achievement is very good in Years 10-11.
- ICT and electronic equipment are used very well to enhance both teaching and learning.
- The assessment of pupils' classwork is done very thoroughly throughout the school.
- The subject's leadership and management are of high quality.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

### Commentary

226. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is above the national average. In the teacher assessments carried out at the end of 2002, about half the pupils were judged to have achieved the benchmark of at least Level 5. The proportion in the 2003 assessments was put at about one quarter. There are no national norms to which these results can be reliably compared. Inspection evidence suggests that the assessments are too low and do not accurately reflect pupils' attainment in the whole of the musical education they receive.

227. Pupils play keyboards very confidently by the end of Year 9. They have a good understanding of musical rudiments and of such terms as *major*, *minor*, *ritenuto* and *ostinato*. They are familiar with the major and minor scales and chords from which to select notes in their compositions. They acquire a good knowledge of a fair range of music – as, for example, jazz, reggae and symphonies by Britten and Tchaikovsky. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of music have improved well since the last inspection.

228. The quality of their learning in Years 7-9 is good overall. Pupils have entered the school until recently with an overall educational standard that was below average and have had very varied experience in the subject. Early lessons focus on the basic elements of music, exploring beat, rhythm and such expressive features as *crescendo* and *accelerando*. In one lesson in Year 7, for instance, pupils explored these features by singing a simple song in many different ways. In Year 8, pupils use various kinds of musical notation, as they play pieces involving melody, chord and bass line on electronic keyboards.

229. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall attainment is above that usually found. In the 2001 and 2002 GCSE examinations, taken together, 24 out of 28 pupils gained grades in the range A\*-C – a high proportion. Two pupils gained grade A\*. These results are in line with a trend since the last inspection. In 2003, however, only seven out of 15 pupils gained grades in the A-C range. This lower result was largely accounted for by the lower standard of intake to the course.

230. In the work seen during the inspection, the overall standard of performance, composition and listening was above the national average by the end of Year 11. Pupils play a fair range of

instruments; a significant number play guitars. Some pupils perform difficult pieces at a high standard – as, for example, Beethoven's *Pathétique* piano sonata and an original song that had a challenging guitar accompaniment. In lessons on listening, pupils are trained well to identify the main features of pieces and to analyse musical structures.

231. In Years 10-11, almost all pupils achieve very well. Entry to the GCSE course does not require pupils to be already good practitioners of music. Owing to the challenge of the course and the very good teaching they receive, some pupils learn rapidly and achieve the necessary level of performance well within two years. They also acquire knowledge quickly. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils learned about the instruments used in Baroque music and identified common features, such as ground bass, recitative and counterpoint.
232. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good overall. They are very good in Years 10-11, where they quickly develop a mature approach that is particularly evident when they perform. At this stage, they also take a fair level of responsibility for their own learning.
233. Teaching is good overall, with a significant number of very good lessons (especially in Years 10-11). One lesson was judged to be outstanding. Pupils benefit greatly from the unusually high musical expertise of the staff, who perform at a professional level. Pupils are enthused and motivated to reach higher standards themselves as a result of their experience of these high levels of musicianship.
234. Teachers make very good use of audio-visual presentations, computers and other electronic aids not only when presenting material to pupils, but also as a means of enhancing pupils' own performances and self-evaluation. The teaching of literacy is good overall, especially in the understanding and use of musical terminology.
235. Teachers always prepare lessons in fine detail, with the sections of lessons timed. Pupils' conduct is managed effectively, without unpleasant confrontation. Appropriate, individual attention is given to pupils with special educational needs – including those who have a natural flair for music and who need to work at a higher level than the class average. Pupils' work is assessed very well and regularly. Pupils are told the criteria for achievement of various levels and challenged by being set realistic targets.
236. The subject is led and managed very well. A large number of pupils receive lessons from a team of visiting teachers, who make a good contribution to standards. Resources are of good quality and very well maintained. The accommodation is used well, in spite of the smallness of one of the main teaching rooms. A good range of extra-curricular activities, including choir and band, together with many opportunities for pupils to perform to a variety of audiences, contributes well to the high success of the department and its impact on the whole school. Overall, there has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teaching is good.
- Lessons are very well prepared.
- Pupils achieve well in practical lessons.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and participate well.

- GCSE results remain consistently low.
- There is too much dominance by teachers on the GCSE course.

### Commentary

237. By the end of Year 9, both boys and girls attain well in practical aspects of the subject. Their overall standard is above average. Boys, for example, make good progress in learning and applying defensive tactics in basketball. Most pass and shoot confidently. In badminton, newly acquired techniques are quickly used to vary service effectively. Girls perform well in dance and gymnastics, showing both confidence and good technique. Their work is original and well planned. In gymnastics, many perform moves such as cartwheels, handstands and rolls competently. Through a well-organised programme of cross-country running, teachers ensure that pupils gain a clear understanding about the effects of exercise upon their bodies.
238. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall standard is average, but is above average in practical work. In one Year 11 aerobics lesson, girls reached a good standard by working extremely hard throughout. Their performances were good and new sequences were very capably constructed and performed. In GCSE work, however, the number of A\*-C grades obtained is well below the national average. Written work, with the exception of a personal training programme, indicates that pupils are given little initiative to plan their work. Too many files contain identical work. There is little evidence that ICT is used either for research or for drafting and writing. Teachers' marking does not contain sufficient information to help pupils to improve.
239. Most boys and girls achieve well in lessons in Years 7-9 and satisfactorily in Years 10-11. Teachers have high expectations and pupils make clear gains in both acquiring and using a range of skills and tactics. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress; when it is necessary, very good general support or special equipment is provided for them.
240. Teaching is good. Lessons are very well prepared. Learning objectives are clear and usually shared with pupils. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. All teachers are specialists and use their good subject knowledge effectively, particularly in practical lessons. Occasionally, in theory lessons, teachers dominate lessons, denying pupils the opportunity to reflect or to question issues.
241. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Very few pupils miss taking part in nearly all lessons without valid reasons. They sustain their efforts and clearly enjoy the subject. They answer well, when teachers require them to. Both boys and girls cooperate and collaborate very effectively.
242. The leadership of the subject is good. The five teachers work very well together and share a strong desire to improve the provision of the subject. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Good management ensures that the department functions efficiently. Many displays in the department contain information for pupils and a few celebrate their achievements. The GCSE course, taking place in only two "twilight" periods each week for both Years 10 and 11, is short of teaching time. Since the previous report, outdoor facilities have been improved; playing fields have better drainage and a security fence surrounds them.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS**

### **Business Education**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GNVQ results are commendably high.
- Teaching is thorough, encouraging and well planned, with an emphasis on pupils' independence.
- Pupils enjoy the subject and work with seriousness and purpose.

#### **Commentary**

243. The results on this popular GNVQ course in 2003 were high. The subject's average points score (6.6) was higher than that of any other subject in the school. All 49 pupils obtained at least a grade C. The subject contributed 44 A\* grades to the school's total of 61. It also accounted for over one third of the school's A grades.

244. The subject was sampled in three lessons in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' overall standard of work is average. As a result of teachers' very careful planning and their encouragement of guided, independent working, pupils tackle tasks confidently. One Year 10 class, for example, was investigating how businesses work. They had thoroughly researched the range of products sold and other commercial activities by the use of a questionnaire. They then went on to make appropriate contacts with a selected list of companies. All tackled the work seriously and showed a good level of interest. A Year 11 class, investigating administrative systems and identifying the ways of collecting and storing information, carefully undertook an Internet search for external visits and discussed thoughtfully how to make a shortlist of venues.

245. The teaching of the course is good. Teachers organise pupils' work very carefully and realistically. They plan tasks that are both manageable but stretching. They ensure that pupils have to think carefully about what they are doing and believe strongly in guided independence. They have very good relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils are well motivated, confident, interested and purposeful. They achieve well.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have good attitudes and the self-confidence to speak their views.
- One day each year is devoted to good practical activities.
- The school successfully provides an "inclusive" ethos.
- Teaching insufficiently raises pupils' awareness of citizenship issues.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to exercise responsibility.
- Citizenship topics and pupils' progress are inadequately monitored.

## Commentary

246. There are no norms available for this subject against which pupils' attainment and experience can be nationally measured. The evidence of lessons, pupils' work and assessment files, together with oral accounts of activities undertaken, however, indicates that pupils' attainment is average and their achievement is satisfactory by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils' good attitudes and the clear intention of senior staff suggest that the subject has the potential to reach above average standards in all the aspects required by the National Curriculum.
247. The quality of learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils are reasonably confident in thinking and speaking in lessons and in informal discussions. Most clarify their knowledge of relevant issues – such as the role of local government, how representatives engage in debate and how sensitive attitudes are formed towards disabled people. In the last school year, pupils from all year groups contributed to discussions about the threat to a valued local amenity. As a result, they lodged a formal petition with the local council.
248. Pupils have a voice in aspects of running the school. Year councils and the full school council discuss and highlight, items of concern to the school – as, for example, how the school and local environment might be improved. Pupils undertake some library duties, help with supervision at lunchtime and serve as peer counsellors, for which they receive training. Overall, however, pupils have too few opportunities to undertake significant responsibilities and to show enterprise.
249. Teaching in lessons varies from satisfactory to very good and is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers make it very clear to pupils that certain issues are important for the common good – as, for example, renewable energy (in science) and access to the countryside (in geography). Across the curriculum, however, in lessons that lend themselves especially well to learning about relevant issues, teachers insufficiently ensure that pupils overtly recognise the relevance of topics to citizenship.
250. In the designated citizenship lessons, teachers prepare pupils well by giving them such practical research to undertake as interviewing their own families in connection with society's perceptions of elderly people. In weaker lessons, teachers do not pay enough attention to techniques that facilitate good discussion and argument – as, for example, suitable seating arrangements and agreed rules for listening and taking turns.
251. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject. In most lessons they work well in pairs and groups. When given the opportunity, they voice their opinions sincerely and with reasonable clarity. Many show a high level of respect for the rights and opinions of others.
252. Aspects of citizenship have until recently been managed by several teachers, with the result that the various strands have not been fully coordinated. A main coordinator has now been appointed and has formed good plans. The school is poised to carry out a thorough review of the overall provision in the subject.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, the latest year for which full 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
English literature	10	100	94	70	38	50.0	38.9
Mathematics	13	23	74	8	34	8.5	31.3
Biology	11	73	82	27	33	27.3	33.2
Art	9	100	90	78	43	50.0	39.0
Geography	6	100	88	33	36	38.3	36.3
History	7	86	92	14	37	30.0	37.8
Media studies	13	92	94	38	36	39.0	38.5
Psychology	10	70	83	10	33	23.0	33.6
Sociology	2	100	84	100	34	36.0	33.8

### Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English literature	5	100	99	80	44	104.0	84.3
Mathematics	0	/	93	/	52	/	84.7
Biology	7	86	92	0	36	51.4	74.1
Art	5	100	96	80	49	104.0	85.1
Geography	0	/	97	/	41	/	80.9
History	0	/	97	/	41	/	81.2
Media studies	5	100	98	60	37	88.0	81.1
Psychology	0	/	94	/	39	/	77.7
Sociology	0	/	95	/	40	/	79.1
Business studies	2	100	87	50	17	80.0	60.1
Health and social care	6	100	90	33	16	80.0	62.5
ICT	14	93	84	7	25	68.3	64.3

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

253. The focus was on English literature, but English language was also sampled. There are no modern foreign languages taught in the sixth form. Seven students currently study English language in Years 12 and 13. In 2003, eight students were entered for GCE A-level. All passed the examination, although only one student attained a grade as high as C. Of the six students whose progress could be tracked from GCSE, half achieved well and half unsatisfactorily. One Year 12 lesson was observed during the inspection. The students were preparing their own fairytale, writing with a focus on entertainment. Their discussion on the structure, moralistic and

linguistic conventions of fairy tales was sound. It reinforced their own understanding and effectively provided a model for their own writing. Teaching and learning were satisfactory.

## English literature

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of the course is well done.
- Both the AS and A2 courses are well organised.
- Students progress well in the subject.
- Teaching is in intellectually challenging groups.

### Commentary

254. English literature is a popular course. It is also a high-performing subject where students do well. A total of 29 students currently take the subject at either AS- or A-level. The overall standard of work of most current students is well in line with course requirements and the majority of students make good progress. In 2003, seven students took the GCE A-level examination. All passed and five obtained either A or B grades. As in 2002, nearly all made good progress from their earlier GCSE studies and none performed unsatisfactorily.
255. In a Year 12 lesson, students studying Shakespeare's *Othello* quickly created an evidence trail on what is known about Othello in Act 1, noting carefully where, for example, he is pompous, overbearing, open or politically acute. The well-organised textual search for supporting evidence that students undertook extended well their understanding of the play. This rigorous (and sometimes very demanding) focus on textual knowledge is a characteristic of students' achievement and progress. They responded thoughtfully to the teacher's probing questions. The resulting analysis and interpretation contributed powerfully to their learning.
256. A Year 13 group of students, studying Act 3 scene 2 of John Webster's play, *The Duchess of Malfi*, effectively understood clearly the links between scene 1 and scene 2 and the Machiavellian role of the Cardinal. They achieved well as they deepened their knowledge of the play, the subtle use of language and their skill in note-taking.
257. Teaching is always at least good and sometimes very good. This good teaching enables students to develop sound critical and analytical approaches to literature. Teachers have very high subject knowledge. This ensures that students' individual needs can be met at different levels. Lessons are very well planned and students are strongly encouraged to participate fully in class.
258. The assessment of students' written work is thorough and probing. The assessment of their learning in lessons focuses on recognising their strengths and identifying where more guidance is required. Students learn well. They are regularly required to contribute insights they have gained from wider reading. The focus of teaching on students' interpretation and evidence from texts establishes high expectations and successful progress. Students concentrate very well in lessons and collaborate closely with their teachers and peers.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

259. The standard of students' literacy in other subjects is average overall. The planning and drafting of writing tasks are a strong feature of students' work in art, vocational courses and media studies. Good note-taking occurs in science, art, history and media studies. The standard of students' presentation, spelling and punctuation is good in most subjects.
260. Students' oral work is a strong feature. Clarity, expression and accuracy are characteristic of a good standard of reading aloud in most subjects. Interactive discussions are strongest in mathematics, art, vocational courses, drama and media studies. Students' use of subject vocabulary is less prominent in history.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at GCE A-level are around the national average.
  - Teaching is good (or better) and often highly imaginative.
  - Good leadership and management are now moving A-level work forward, after a lull in 2002.
  - Students in Year 13 show little obvious enthusiasm for the subject.
  - In recent years, the number of students proceeding from AS- to A2-level has been low.
261. In 2002, there were no students following the A2-level course. In 2001, the results were in line with the national average, after being well below in 1999 and 2000. In 2003, five students completed the course: two made good progress, one progressed satisfactorily and two made unsatisfactory progress.
262. In the lessons seen, students in both Year 12 and Year 13 worked in line with course expectations. Overall, the achievement of current students is satisfactory. Year 13 has, however, only four students following the A2-level course, after a significant reduction in numbers from the AS-level course in Year 12.
263. In a Year 13 lesson on statistics, students arrived late, but then worked hard after this disappointing start. They showed a sound understanding of how to use statistical tables – as, for example, to calculate the probability of numbers of television sets per household, given relevant starting information. Prior to this, the students had established clearly the conditions under which this type of data distribution was classified.
264. The same students were able to use the same distribution within the more abstract context of algebra. They used calculators efficiently and accurately. They demonstrated a reasonable level of awareness of the number of ways that algebraic terms can be combined. Although students worked very hard and discussed their methods carefully with the teacher, they showed a lack of enthusiasm for mathematics in both lessons.
265. There are ten students in Year 12. In statistics, this number was used very effectively to promote their confidence. They worked in pairs to produce logical solutions to questions about the spread of data. By the end of the lesson, they had made a sound start in presenting the work of their peers to the rest of the group. The same students found work in algebraic division more difficult. Nevertheless, good progress was made in making students think deeply and at a high level, whilst maintaining their confidence. Students in Year 12 show enthusiasm for the subject, despite the big step they are taking from GCSE mathematics.



266. Students resitting GCSE mathematics have made a satisfactory start to revision for the examination. In a lesson seen, they discussed their difficulties constructively with their teacher and one another in a seminar session.
267. Teaching is good overall. It is often highly imaginative in the way that teachers engage pupils' interest and arrange work in pairs either to produce written answers or to provoke discussion. Whilst this process is occasionally too demanding, teachers challenge students very well. They target work effectively on many occasions at a highly individual level. They make impressively clear their vision that mathematics is learned well by discussion and by doing problems together. They set a good tone in lessons for students to appreciate the importance of independent study.
268. Work is assessed accurately. Students receive prompt feedback and clear advice for improvement. Teachers grasp opportunities to relate mathematical work to real life – such as in the lesson with latecomers, where the teacher skillfully used this slackness as the basis for a question. They have been less successful at promoting confidence and enthusiasm amongst Year 13 students.
269. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has worked hard to restore the department's image after there were no A2-entries in 2002, partly because of problems with staff illness. Improvement has been satisfactory since the previous inspection; a greater proportion of students now gain higher grades.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

270. Standards of mathematics, where seen in other subjects, are broadly as expected nationally. There are good opportunities for using tessellations in art to produce abstract designs. Students in geography compare data in rank order accurately. In ICT, students represent data in suitable tables and graphs and use measurement and number satisfactorily. Graphical representations are used to good effect in most business education assignments.

### **SCIENCE**

271. The main focus was on biology, but chemistry and physics were also sampled.
272. Chemistry and physics at AS-level attract small numbers, typically in the range of two to five candidates. The number progressing to A2 in Year 13 tends to be smaller, owing to the unsatisfactory results that some students gain at AS-level.
273. In 2002, just two students took A2-level in each of chemistry and physics. Both failed chemistry (from high GCSE grades), but both passed physics (although with low A-level grades and making unsatisfactory progress). Performance was substantially better in 2003: the two chemistry students passed, a sound performance, whilst the one physics candidate achieved well and passed. The reasons for the unsatisfactory progress of some students and low retention rates from Year 12 to 13 have partly been their weak grounding in mathematics. Some teaching from staff who have since left the school was considered uninspiring.
274. Two physics lessons were observed. Both were good. In a Year 12 lesson, a group of four students was engaged in a friendly, sparkling debate on whether Newton's constant should be 9.81 or 10 for the purposes of a calculation on kinetic energy. Even the (unusual) reading aloud was well articulated. The students enjoyed the good teaching and what they learned. In the Year 13 lesson, one student received individual attention. He was able to set up apparatus to measure

forces surrounding electrical and magnetic fields and then successfully manipulate the data. Teaching was, again, positive and helpful.

275. Two chemistry lessons were seen. In a satisfactory Year 12 lesson, students were initially hesitant in dealing with the concept of molar quantities. They rapidly gained in confidence, however and soon made their calculations with no difficulty. The teaching was sound. In a good Year 13 chemistry lesson, the two students were joined by Year 12 students to form an audience for a mini-presentation by their older peers on entropy. This approach, guided by good teaching, enabled a useful cross-fertilisation of ideas to take place. The students learned much about the demands of formal presentations.

## **Biology**

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are committed and enthusiastic .
- Investigative studies and fieldwork are good.
- The achievement of many students is lower in this subject than in many others.
- Recent examination results have been poor.

### **Commentary**

276. In recent years, biology has been the most popular science subject. In 2003, there were 12 candidates for the AS biology examination: of these just eight passed and four did so with the lowest E grade. At A2 level in Year 13, 70 per cent of students have passed the examination in the last three years – a proportion well below the national average. In 2003, only three out of eight candidates passed and most made unsatisfactory progress from GCSE. This was a poor set of results. Current work indicates an improvement in departmental performance and satisfactory progress by students. Intensive monitoring is required by the school to ensure that past weaknesses are not repeated.
277. In the four lessons observed, teaching was good. Lessons had been carefully planned to give logical sequences of information, convey new knowledge and check understanding. A balance of experienced staff with younger enthusiastic teachers has created a purposeful atmosphere for the subject. Currently four teachers contribute to the courses. This carries a risk of insufficient overlap between sections and modules across Years 12-13 and weak coverage of those areas that require the synthesis of ideas from a range of topics.
278. In a good Year 13 lesson, students collated information from a variety of sources, as they considered how the different parts of the human body regulate the level of glucose in the blood. Students were hesitant during the feedback session, although their understanding was consistent with the grades they had attained at AS-level. They were well supported by their teacher, who guided them to the most salient features, thereby raising their potential grade at A2-level.
279. Students work well together. They recognise the skills of their abler peers, but most are prepared to contribute to discussions and to seek clarification without hesitation. This confidence was noticeable in a good lesson with a Year 12 group, where students successfully gave mini-presentations on the selective nature of enzymes. Students in both years (and in all three sciences) are appreciative of the teaching they receive.

280. The leadership and management of the subject are sound. Improvement since the last inspection has, however, been unsatisfactory. In the summer term of Year 12, students attend a residential field trip to Aberystwyth, where an in-depth comparison is undertaken of freshwater and marine species. Students in Year 13 speak highly of this experience.
281. No lessons were observed where ICT equipment was used, but students state that they have sufficient access to computers and to the Internet in school. Students do not, however, have access to a computer study area within the department that could, for example, enable them to try out their own investigations or work with younger pupils on projects that show science as a worthwhile pastime.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. Their expertise and guidance are good.
- Students have a sound attitude to work.
- Students' lack of ICT experience in Years 10-11 slows their post-16 progress.
- Students' attainment and progress are not well enough monitored in school.

### **Commentary**

282. The focus of the inspection was the AVCE course in ICT, which is provided for the school by South East Derbyshire College of Further Education. Four lessons were inspected, covering both year groups in the sixth form. The course was offered for the first time in September 2000. Students follow either a course of six units (equal to one GCE A-level subject) or the more demanding 12-unit course (which is equivalent to two A-levels).
283. Results in 2003 were well below average: only one third of students achieved a pass grade. This overall result compares poorly with that achieved in the previous year, when 93 per cent of students passed. The overall standard of work of both the current Year 12 and Year 13 students generally meets course requirements.
284. The attainment of students on entry to the course is varied. They begin the course, however, with limited experience of the main software applications normally used, owing to insufficient teaching in Years 10-11. As a result, students encounter some elements of ICT for the first time in Year 12 and have much ground to cover over the two years of the sixth form. Most students make satisfactory progress during the course. This represents a good achievement, given their low starting-point.
285. Most students meet database and spreadsheet work and learn about the technical aspects of computer hardware and systems for the first time in Year 12. They learn quickly and make satisfactory progress in lessons and coursework. Year 13 students, for example, create a relational database to log computer faults and track the progress of repairs. They design and produce attractive support materials and user guides for company staff or attractive, animated, multimedia presentations showing inexperienced users how to log on and use networked computers. Others show good levels of intellectual effort and imagination in designing software interfaces for unusual environments – as, for example, imaginative data-entry solutions for process workers, whose protective clothing prevents the use of a conventional keyboard.

286. Students' skills in using word processing and desktop publishing are well developed overall. Students use these tools confidently to produce the documents and guides for their work in each course unit. They learn to design spreadsheets to help businesses to model their expenditure and work efficiently. They use ICT well to keep a development log of their ongoing work. In Year 13, students quickly design and build sophisticated websites for a range of commercial organisations – such as fashion houses, toy shops and engineering companies.
287. Students show good attitudes to lessons. They listen attentively and work with diligence and curiosity to extend the scope of their learning. They strive to improve the quality and accuracy of their work, showing persistence and application.
288. Teaching is good and has some very good features. Teachers' subject knowledge is of a very high standard and is the key factor in improving the quality and pace of pupils' learning. Lessons are carefully planned. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to help pupils to understand each stage of lessons. Teachers give clear explanations, mark coursework well and ensure that students understand how their work is going. They set firm guidelines for completing coursework.
289. Teachers give students well-structured, sensitive support in lessons. They help them to work independently. The quality of one-to-one help is very high; students receive detailed, helpful guidance on how to improve their work – as, for example, by a "hit counter" routine to their websites. Teachers keep extensive records of pupils' attainment and progress.
290. Course management is largely devolved by the school to the three college tutors who teach the subject. This has been unsatisfactory in the past: inadequate liaison between the two institutions failed to identify underperformance and gaps in students' knowledge quickly and partly led to poor examination results in 2003. Both school and college staff are now working together more closely to monitor students' progress on the course, although short-term monitoring is still not effective or regular enough.
291. Students generally enjoy the subject. They value the good facilities and teaching approaches provided by the college. Most believe that they are well taught and given good support, although a minority sometimes feel the need for more direct help. The subject is well resourced for Year 12 students; they are taught entirely at the college site with extensive, modern facilities. Year 13 students, who are taught on the school site, have generally adequate, but limited, facilities. Library resources for independent study and wider subject reading are also limited.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

292. The use of ICT across sixth-form subjects is fairly satisfactory, but could be more extensive. The specialist ICT courses equip those students very well for the wider use of ICT applications in their studies and future careers. Other students are often hampered by insufficient use of ICT earlier on in school, especially by its light, inconsistent use in Years 10 and 11. Most students develop reasonable competence in the basic skills of word processing, but their overall standard is below average in other applications.
293. Overall, little use was made of ICT in the sixth-form lessons seen during the inspection. In biology, for example, no ICT equipment was used; students do not have ready access to a computer area for their own investigations, although they have reasonable access to computers and the Internet elsewhere. In art, ICT is used for some research, but access is limited and ICT use limited. The same is true of history. In contrast, business studies students make frequent use of ICT for word processing and the Internet and achieve a good standard in both activities. As in Years 10 and 11, the school requires a coherent policy for the planning, use and auditing of all aspects of ICT in the sixth form.

## HUMANITIES

294. The main focus was on geography, history, psychology and sociology. Religious education could not be sampled, because the school does not teach the units of work specified in the *Agreed Syllabus* or similar units of work designed by itself. This is the third inspection report to indicate the school's non-compliance with this statutory requirement. The governors' audit of statutory requirements wrongly claims that this statutory requirement is met. Sixth-form RE provision requires immediate attention.
295. Two law lessons in Year 12 were sampled. The overall standard reached was in line with course requirements. Students displayed a good level of interest in the practical and moral issues associated with sentencing policy and the work of the Crown Prosecution Service. They readily embarked on investigations and analyses. Students' class contributions, although sometimes mumbled and brief, adequately reported their conclusions. Most answers were serious and broad-minded. Teachers developed the issues well and provided suitable challenge – as, for example, raising subtle questions that students had not initially considered or acting as “devil's advocate”. Some students, however, require more guidance on how to extract key information from texts quickly and logically. Both students and teachers give every indication of enjoying the course.

### Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The fieldwork programme is well organised and of high quality.
- Good assessment procedures clearly inform pupils what they need to do to improve.
- Students are well motivated and conscientious.
- Departmental leadership is effective and provides a clear sense of purpose.
- Teaching has insufficient rigour and challenge.

#### Commentary

296. The overall standard of work is average. There were no students entered for the A2-level examination in 2002. In 2003, examination results were in line with the 2002 national results. All students gained a pass grade, a good level of achievement. Results in the AS-level taken at the end of Year 12 in 2002 were in line with the national average and all students passed. Results were lower in 2003. The department analyses all results carefully and has implemented ways to improve standards.
297. Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge of how cities grow and change. One group, for instance, understood the main features of land use in urban areas and the difference between regeneration and redevelopment, and how these change the way the land is used in the centre of cities. They have a sound knowledge of how landscapes are formed, but find some explanations difficult. Students studying flooding, for example, understood why floods occur, but were unsure of the details shown by a flood hydrograph.
298. Students in Year 13 have a good knowledge of how landscapes are changed – as, for instance, by glaciation. They clearly understand some of the complex links between people and the environment and how people change their environment to overcome the problems caused. One group, for example, studied information about the patterns of crime in a local city and drew

accurate conclusions regarding the effects of geographical features on crime rates. Students have a sound knowledge of exemplars that illustrate the topics they have studied.

299. Throughout the sixth form, students have a good grasp of geographical terms and the majority in Year 13 use them correctly. They extract information accurately from a wide range of resource materials and use the collected information effectively to answer geographical questions. Students have good skills in investigative work, collecting and analysing data, drawing appropriate conclusions and evaluating the methods they have used.
300. Students make satisfactory progress through the course in gaining knowledge and understanding. They persevere with extended pieces of work, are keen to learn, work hard and develop good individual study skills. As a result, their achievement is satisfactory. Students do not achieve as well as they could in lessons, however, because teachers dominate discussions. Students are insufficiently encouraged to work answers out for themselves or to discuss their ideas with others.
301. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have a good command of the subject. They give clear, well-structured explanations and use well-chosen illustrations that gain students' interest and enthusiasm. Lessons are always well organised and start promptly. The objectives of lessons are always made known to students, but lessons rarely finish with an assessment of whether they have been achieved. Teachers' questions, however, often lack the rigour required to provide a real challenge for students. Little opportunity is provided for students to develop their understanding and test their ideas through discussion in pairs or groups.
302. Good relationships exist between staff and students. Behaviour and attitudes are very good. Students are well motivated, attend lessons regularly and complete work diligently, but few engage fully in class discussion. Lessons move at a swift pace, so that students maintain concentration throughout and assimilate information rapidly. Homework is set regularly and used effectively. Work is marked thoroughly. Regular assessment enables teachers to provide well-focused information on how individual students may raise their standards.
303. The subject is well led and managed. There is a clear sense of direction and a desire to raise standards. A strength of the subject is the carefully organised and high quality programme of fieldwork visits. The standards achieved at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Teachers try to ensure that all students are actively involved in lessons.
- Students' attitudes to work are very good.
- Teachers do not make enough use of ICT for teaching and learning.
- The number and range of books in the main library are unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

304. The standard of work by students in Years 12 and 13 is in line with that expected nationally. The number of students who have taken the subject at AS- and A2-level in the last three years has

been small. Their average points score has ranged from a little above average to below average. The two 2003 candidates at A2-level made good progress over the two years of the course. The standard of work seen during the inspection was average overall; a minority of students show the potential to reach high grades.

305. Students generally have sound knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. In Year 12, for example, they identified and explained the reasons why the system of farming changed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In their work on 19<sup>th</sup> century European history, they showed sound understanding of the problems facing the Italian government following the unification of Italy. The students who presented their findings orally did so articulately. A sample of essays seen were of average standard, but some written work was immature in style.
306. Students in Year 13 have a generally sound outline knowledge of the Liberal reforms of the period from 1906 to 1914. They explained successfully, for instance, the message in a political cartoon of the period. They used their knowledge adequately to write speeches for and against the reforms. Those students asked to oppose the reforms had difficulty in understanding why people at the time should have done so. The standard of a sample of essays seen during the inspection was average. Those from the higher attainers attempted to evaluate the relative importance of issues, but the lower attainers' work was largely narrative and described rather than explained issues.
307. In lessons, students' progress and achievement are usually good. Most achieve standards at least commensurate with their attainment at the end of Year 11. A minority achieve higher standards than might be expected. They arrive with preparatory work done, ready to move on to new work. Teachers often ask them to work in pairs; this approach helps them to deepen their understanding. Their commitment to work, even when it is demanding, is a key factor in their usually good progress.
308. The quality of teaching is largely good. Teachers are confident with their subject. They understand well the extent of students' prior attainment and provide appropriate support where it is needed. Teachers use paired work and student presentations to involve students actively in lessons. Their comments on students' written work are, however, often quite brief and do not give students enough insight into how to improve work in the future.
309. Course leadership and management are satisfactory. The very limited use of ICT for teaching and learning and the unsatisfactory number and range of books in the main library are weaknesses. There is, however, a small departmental library available for the sixth form to use.

## **Psychology**

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Schemes of work are well planned.
- Teaching is lively and efficient, but insufficiently explores ideas.
- Examination results are below average, particularly at AS-level.
- The subject does not have its own teaching base or adequate resources.
- The attendance and punctuality of a minority of students are unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

310. The number of students taking A-level is usually small. The current year's AS-group is large, but in the past the number of students continuing to A2-level has been small. Examination results at A2 level are below average. The majority of students, however, achieve their predicted grades and average point scores have been similar to most other subjects. Performance at AS-level is also below average: although a few candidates achieve high grades, a larger number do not achieve a pass grade. The unvalidated results for 2003 continue the same pattern. Overall, however, students' achievement is broadly satisfactory.
311. The standard of current work tends to be below average overall, but represents broadly satisfactory achievement. At this early stage of the course, students in Year 12 show good retention of the work done so far. They apply this well in class in deepening their knowledge of, for example, the ethical dilemmas associated with psychological research. In Year 13, students show in discussion that they have understood and remembered the previous year's work and integrate it soundly into new topics. Written work in Year 12 consists mainly, at this stage of the course, of well-ordered notes and exercises that have introduced them to the content and approach of this new subject. Year 13 written work is well organised. It displays a sound grasp of the fundamentals of the subject at a standard that is in line with a middle-range pass.
312. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers provide well-structured lessons. They revise previous work soundly, give information clearly and question students sharply. The focus of teaching is on ensuring that students have the basic information and skills to pass their examinations. Students generally approve of the way the course is taught, but regret the paucity of resources.
313. Although a small minority of Year 12 students, particularly males, show an immature attitude to study, the majority are interested and contribute accurate answers to questions. They take part productively in group activities that are designed to get them to think and practise the skills of analysis and research. In Year 13 they engage in more sophisticated discussions, drawing on a wider range of knowledge, their other subjects and their own experience. The brisk pace of lessons occasionally results in a premature halt to discussion and to students insufficiently exploring their own ideas with the rest of the group.
314. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The school-college management of the subject is, however, unsatisfactory. The subject is taught on school premises by further education college staff. There are suitable formal and informal mechanisms for staff liaison. Limited provision is, however, made within the school's staffroom and meetings system for college staff. Several issues about shared systems, communications, timetabling and student attendance require urgent resolution.
315. The college staff, who are entirely responsible for teaching the course, work in a variety of rooms in the school. They have no base-room, few resources and no opportunity to store materials or set up displays. There are few relevant books and no journals in the school library, which has only been upgraded in the last year. It does, however, retain additional textbooks for Year 12.
316. Students do have access to the college's library and some journals are brought to the school. College staff use the school's system of monitoring and assessment. Course files show this arrangement works well. This scheme of work, using a college model, is well constructed. Students are helpfully provided by the college with a course handbook.



## Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good.
- The professional, very well organised teaching is closely geared to students' needs.
- The college-provided support materials are very helpful.
- The subject has no base room or central resources to support students' studies adequately.

### Commentary

317. Students' overall achievement is good and the standard of work above average. This judgement is based on only a small number of students who take the subject and the short time that it has been available in the school. For example, the two AS-level candidates in 2001 (the first year the subject was offered) achieved A and B grades and an average points score that exceeded that of many other subjects in the school. The 2002 A2-level results of the five students ranged from grades A to E, but matched their AS-performance and, in most cases, exceeded their predicted grade. The A2-level results for 2003 show a similar spread, sound progress and, again, a full pass rate. At AS-level the results of the four candidates were above average.
318. The standard of classwork is consistent with at least a mid-range pass. Students' files in Year 13 contain well-ordered notes for revision purposes and adequate short answers to questions. Unmarked longer pieces of Year 13 work show a good grasp of facts, but modest interpretation and analysis of the information presented. Year 12 work shows excellent progress in the limited time since the start of the course: the two assessed pieces of work, although varying in accuracy, depth and style, are at least grade C in standard. Students' other work in files, based on their own notes and small pieces of research from handouts, is neat, accurate and logical in its coverage of the AS-units.
319. Teaching is very good overall and students learn well. Students are given a clear picture of lesson objectives and are led carefully through each topic. Teachers use an appropriate variety of learning styles, including video extracts. Students appreciate the teaching methods employed, the support of their teachers and the feedback on their work. They (rightly) express some concern about the limited books and other resources to underpin their learning.
320. The five members present of the Year 12 group showed a good grasp of issues concerned with "family" and "households" and what these terms mean in different historical and cultural contexts. They discussed these concepts logically in small groups and arrived at accurate answers to questions. The small group of Year 13 students worked conscientiously and made adequate notes within the teacher's framework. They were, however, more hesitant in venturing answers to questions and less articulate in their responses on interactionism and interpretivism than is appropriate at this stage of an A-level course. They were more comfortable with a later topic on social class that they could relate to their own experience.
321. Leadership of the subject is good and management satisfactory. The subject is taught by further education college staff within the *Ilkeston Venture* arrangements. The school's provision of resources to support the subject is inadequate; the lack of a social sciences base-room restricts the opportunity to store or display materials. Staff files are thorough; they show a coherent teaching practice and full records of students' prior attainment, target grades and current performance. The college provides a useful subject handbook for students: this lists course

content and requirements, career opportunities and book and Internet references for further work. Another valuable tool provided is a separate study skills handbook for the social sciences.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

322. The major focus was on art and media studies, but theatre studies was also sampled. A total of ten students study theatre studies in Years 12 and 13. In 2001, all candidates passed with grades in the range B-D. There were no entries for the examination in 2002 or 2003.
323. One A2-level and one AS lesson were observed in the subject. Teaching is good. It strikes a careful balance between tutorial support and opportunities to foster critical understanding. Students in the Year 12 class, studying Sophocles's *Antigone*, discussed the structure and significance of Creon's speech thoughtfully. They deepened their interpretative skills as they considered, for instance, the lines "*Money! Nothing worse in our lives, so current, rampant, so corrupting.....I still believe in Zeus*". The students' responses to words in the text were amplified and made very visual, as they created "freeze frames" to capture the essential elements in each section of Creon's speech.
324. A Year 13 A2-level session successfully introduced students to Brecht and his concept of epic theatre before comparing it with the approach of Stanislavski. The differences between the two were made explicit when the students created sequences of movements in preparing for bed. Students learn successfully, because good teaching extends their experience and expertise individually.

### Art

Provision in art is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall standard of work is well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall.
- A very good range of enrichment activities is provided.
- Students require more opportunities to develop initiative and independence.

### Commentary

325. Over the 2000-2002 period, GCE A-level results were well above average. This trend continued in 2003. The overall standard of current work in Years 12 and 13 is also well above average. More female than male students take the subject; those males who do take art attain highly.
326. There is a new emphasis in the department on students gaining a greater understanding of the visual vocabulary of line, tone, texture and colour. This has led students to experiment at a deeper level than previously and enlarge the scale of work undertaken. Sketchbooks contain observational drawings of a high standard. Very good achievement is evident in experiments using, for instance, batik, spray paint, silk-screen printing and paper-making; this has resulted in a good range of work in both two and three dimensions. Little use is made of ICT, however, apart from research purposes.
327. Students in both year groups are aware of and develop strongly held opinions about, a wide range of artists. They have too few opportunities, however, to discuss issues in depth or to present their own independent reports.

328. Students in Year 12 on the AS-level course achieve very well, taking into account their previous GCSE results. Students confirm that they had a smooth transition from Year 11. They appreciate the greater emphasis on experimentation. This has raised their awareness, knowledge and understanding of, for example, expressive drawing and printmaking techniques. These students work on a large scale, producing highly successful tonal studies in charcoal of sections of such objects as shells.
329. In Year 13, students achieve very well, as a result of sensitively planned teaching and such “extension” activities as the forthcoming printmaking workshop. This kind of provision ensures that students continue to expand their skills and experiment boldly with the materials available. Year 13 students made very confident progress when trying a new printmaking technique for the first time, after watching an excellent demonstration given by their teacher.
330. Teaching is always very good and usually outstanding. Teachers are skilled artists or designers and act as very good role models for their students. They work very well as a team to ensure that students receive a very wide range of experiences. When using further education college facilities, those students taking fine art are able to work on a large scale, whilst those who choose textiles extend their skill by using sewing machines.
331. The subject leader is very good. She organises extension workshops for printmaking and enters students’ work in local exhibitions. Kits of good quality materials are supplied to students at a reasonable price. Students make good use of the photocopier – as, for example, to produce stencils for silk-screen printing and pattern work such as tessellations. Art books are well used, but access to computers, videorecorders and slide facilities is limited. In the previous inspection report, art was judged to be a high-attaining subject. It remains so.

## **Media studies**

Provision in media studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most teaching is good. It is sometimes very good.
- Students display very good attitudes to the subject.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Students are not always given the opportunity to contribute their ideas.

### **Commentary**

332. Media Studies is taken by 23 students in Years 12 and 13. In 2002, all A2-level candidates passed and three did so with B grades. In 2003, all nine candidates passed and four gained grades A or B; most students made good progress during their two years in the sixth form, but two did not. The two Year 13 students who took AS-level in 2003 passed with grades A and B. Ten Year 12 students took AS-level in 2003; all passed, usually with middling grades.
333. Clear, well-structured lesson planning is the bedrock of the good quality teaching. The vibrant, challenging teaching in half the lessons seen deepened considerably the conceptual understanding of students. One teacher’s insistence upon the correct use of technical terms is a major factor in students learning with confidence and accuracy.

334. Students generally learn well and make good progress. Year 12 students, studying a fight scene from the film *Snatch*, for example, showed a quick, secure understanding of *mise-en-scene* factors such as location, set and lighting. Discussions are well focused and perceptive, resulting in students making considerable progress in analysis and understanding. Year 13 students, considering the representation of women in film posters, made good progress and deepened their understanding as a result of the teacher's probing questions.
335. Sometimes teaching, learning and progress are satisfactory, but could be better. In a Year 12 lesson, for instance, the teacher set out the lesson task clearly, quickly organised students into groups and used an overhead projector (ohp) to provide a good framework for students' note-taking. The students' copying down of the ohp content wasted valuable time that could have been saved by a handout. The subsequent stage was dominated by the teacher's analytical commentary, during which students were neither asked nor expected to make contributions. The lesson concluded without an effective review of the ground covered.
336. The subject is part of the English faculty. Within this framework it is very well led and managed. Teachers have a very clear understanding of course requirements and thorough assessment practice. Accommodation is satisfactory and learning resources are good. There has been solid improvement in provision since the last inspection.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

337. There was no major focus in this domain, but travel and tourism (AVCE) was sampled. In a poorly attended Year 12 lesson that focused on the major features of the travel industry, the teacher used London as the starter for identifying top tourist attractions. The good interactive teaching style ensured that students contributed their own experience and thoughts. Students were guided well to human and text-based information as well as electronic sources for research. Written work contains evidence of both careful investigations and uncorrected errors. Students' achievement is satisfactory. A sound learning atmosphere was created by the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm and the interest and willingness of the students themselves.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business Studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The examination pass rate is above average.
- Some written work is excellent, showing good use of ICT.
- Teachers are well organised and support students strongly.
- Library resources are inadequate.
- Staff could benefit from industrial or commercial placements.

#### **Commentary**

338. Students' achievement is good. Both the pass rate and the proportion of higher grades gained are above average in this AVCE examination. The number of students on the course in 2002 and 2003 was smaller than in the previous two years; all candidates passed, although no A grades were obtained. The results have, however, often been better than those predicted from students'

earlier GCSE performances. The average points score gained has been higher than for many other subjects in the school.

339. The standard of classwork is generally above average. Students understand the subject well, explain its concepts soundly and show strong interest. Their quality of discussion, particularly in Year 13, is in line with that required for the higher pass grades. The best written work in that year is not only very well presented in terms of accurate word processing and the use of graphs and tables, but explores and analyses topics in detail. Year 12 work is good. For example, initial strategy reports for a marketing project are clearly argued and similarly well presented. In both years, students have a firm grasp of the uses of ICT both for word processing and as a source of information for assignments.
340. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well organised and have clear objectives and targets. Students' progress is regularly checked through both questioning and written work. Teachers' feedback on work is helpful and encouraging, enabling targets to be set for improved standards. Tasks are always discussed fully with the whole class.
341. Most students work enthusiastically, especially in small groups. Staff are exceptionally helpful to students, showing a good knowledge and understanding of them and the subject. Students much appreciate the overall approach of staff and the resources provided. The atmosphere in class is friendly, purposeful and adult.
342. Leadership and management are good. The subject and the faculty have grown purposefully from small beginnings. Staff have developed their expertise thoughtfully through preparing and teaching a range of vocational courses during the last decade and have built up relationships with key local firms. They have, however, had little opportunity to enhance their knowledge of industry and commerce through visits or placements beyond those undertaken with students.
343. Students' progress is regularly and systematically reviewed. Teaching rooms are satisfactorily equipped, but the school's library is inadequate for the subject.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

### **Health and social care**

Provision in health and social care is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well in examinations.
- The standard of current work is good.
- There is a very positive rapport between teacher and students.
- Very well organised teaching ensures very constructive attitudes from students.
- A better teaching room and learning resources are urgently required.

### **Commentary**

344. Students' achievement is very good. Over the last four years, the small number of students who have completed the AVCE course (most of whom followed the six-unit version) have achieved above average results. In many cases they have also done better than was predicted and better

than they did in their other subjects. Over a third of students have achieved the top A or B grades.

345. The overall standard of work is above average. Students in both years work at a level that is consistent with good pass grades. They have a firm understanding of the structure and assessment criteria for the course and respond positively to feedback on their performance – including the useful model of peer feedback and self-assessment. Written work is clearly set out; some initial work in Year 12 lacks depth and analysis, but the best work is thoughtful and well researched.
346. Teaching and learning are very good. The rapport between teacher and students is excellent. No concessions are allowed in the quest for high standards. The negotiation of work is carried out in a friendly, adult fashion. Students are very clear about what is required of them and learn good study habits. The majority respond very positively to the tasks set and to comments from their teacher or peers – as, for example, when constructing questions to be used in interviews with care workers. The teacher questions individuals and groups frequently to make them think carefully about their work and improve it.
347. Students work cooperatively and usually industriously both on their own and with others. Homework is regularly set and recorded in homework diaries. By Year 13, some students have developed the capacity for serious and informed discussion. They perform well in role-play and in making presentations to the whole class.
348. Leadership and management are good. The teacher in charge of this subject operates thoughtfully within the monitoring and assessment structures of both the vocational studies faculty and the awarding body, ensuring that students are aware of what is required and operate to these standards. Good records of student progress are kept.
349. The original teaching room, which displays some recent student work and a variety of internally assembled resources, had to be taken out of use just before the inspection because of structural problems. The subject is temporarily housed in the sixth-form private study area – a reasonable, temporary substitute. The school's library provision does not adequately support the subject.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

There was no major focus in this domain and no general studies or similar programme took place during the inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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