

INSPECTION REPORT

THORNTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Thornton, Bradford

LEA area: Bradford

Unique reference number: 107442

Headteacher: Mr J. Weir

Lead inspector: Mr D. Driscoll

Dates of inspection: 29th September – 3rd October 2003

Inspection number: 261137

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

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Terms used in this report

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

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| School category: | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 – 18 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 1501 |
| School address: | Thornton Grammar School Leaventhorpe Lane Thornton Bradford |
| Postcode: | BD13 3BH |
| Telephone number: | 01274 881082 |
| Fax number: | 01274 814871 |
| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr P. Wilkings |
| Date of previous inspection: | 16 th November 1998 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Despite its name, Thornton Grammar School is a much larger than average comprehensive educating pupils and students between the ages of 11 and 18. There are 1501 pupils and students on roll; 774 boys and 727 girls. The majority of pupils are white, although there are significant numbers of Asian origin, notably Indian and Pakistani. There are, however, representatives of many different ethnic backgrounds at the school. The percentage for whom English is not the mother tongue is high, although all are fluent in English.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average and the proportion with statements of special educational needs is average. Most pupils on the register are there for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, but the special needs cover a wide range, with significant numbers with specific and moderate learning difficulties. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are average. Standards of attainment on entry are below average. The proportion of pupils joining the school at times other than the start of Year 7 is broadly average.

The school has undergone a huge reorganisation in recent years, changing from a 13 to 18 upper school and doubling in size. It has also become a specialist sports college. Many more parents wish to send their child to the school than there are places available.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| 10297 | D. Driscoll | Lead inspector | |
| 9086 | R. Watkins | Lay inspector | |
| 22411 | A. Axon | Team inspector | Mathematics. |
| 19596 | B. Treacy | Team inspector | English. English as an additional language (EAL). |
| 4145 | C. Harrison | Team inspector | Science. |
| 30825 | K. Hayton | Team inspector | Biology. |
| 11933 | D. Cox | Team inspector | Information and communication technology (ICT). |
| 17868 | E. Metcalfe | Team inspector | Art and design. |
| 30973 | G. Hancock | Team inspector | Design and technology. |
| 15832 | J. Vanstone | Team inspector | History. Business education. |
| 15462 | C. Blakemore | Team inspector | Geography. |
| 3793 | J. Peach | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages. |
| 15208 | A. Briggs | Team inspector | Music. |
| 12985 | S. Jeffray | Team inspector | Physical education. |
| 30427 | F. Shuffle-Botham | Team inspector | Religious education. |
| 2597 | C. Jackson | Team inspector | Sociology. Health and social care. Special educational needs. |
| 22590 | R. Castle | Team inspector | Citizenship. |

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a good standard of education and provides satisfactory value for money. Teaching is good and pupils and students achieve well. The school receives well above average funding.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching; gifted and talented pupils do very well.
- Pupils and students are underachieving in French.
- The school's status as a specialist college is being used exceptionally well to influence the work of the whole school.
- Standards are improving rapidly as a result of the headteacher's very good leadership.
- The school does very well in ensuring that all pupils are treated equally and that all can achieve well.

The school has made good progress since its last inspection; standards are now higher and the underachievement of boys from a Pakistani background has been dealt with most successfully. Almost all other issues from the previous inspection have been tackled well, especially those relating to equality of access. Despite improvements, the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all, nor religious education in the sixth form.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance compared with: | | all schools | | | similar schools |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2002 |
| Year 11 | GCSE/GNVQ examinations | D | D | E | E |
| Year 13 | A/AS-level and VCE examinations | n/a | B | 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 attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Achievement is good. The examination results indicated in the table above were a one-year 'blip' caused by reorganisation and are not representative of the true standards in the school. Results in 2003 were the best in the school's history and continued the improvements apparent in the years prior to 2002. Standards are average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, and in the sixth form; pupils and students achieve well in all years; those who are particularly gifted and talented do very well. Achievement is very good in ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in music, but unsatisfactory in French.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils' attitudes are good and their attendance is satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory; it is usually good around school and in lessons, but the number of fixed term exclusions is high.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good in all years. Teaching is good in most subjects in the main school but very good in music. Teaching is also good in most subjects in the sixth form but very good in physical education and art and design and unsatisfactory in French. Teachers control behaviour well and demand equally high standards of their pupils and students in terms of work rate. As a result, pupils and students can get on with their work in a calm environment and learn more than would be usually expected.

Pupils and students make better than expected progress because the curriculum has been planned to meet their needs, especially in Years 10 and 11 where it is very good. Pupils receive good pastoral support so they feel happy and safe at the school. The very good efforts that the school has made in order to provide for the pupils' moral and social development are reflected in their improved attitudes to work and the good relationships that exist throughout the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Leadership at the top is very good and at middle management level is good. Governors do a good job overall.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. There was a high degree of agreement between pupils and their parents. In particular, they were pleased with the teaching and the progress made by pupils. Pupils have high expectations of others' behaviour and parents are particularly pleased with the standards of discipline. Physical education is clearly seen as a strength of the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the curriculum in French so that pupils do not underachieve.
- Improve the systems for monitoring the school's performance to ensure greater consistency in its work and spread very good practice. (1)
- Take a more co-ordinated approach to improving pupils' literacy and speaking skills during their early years in the school.
- Ensure all heads of department have a thorough understanding of data. (2)

Points 1 and 2 also apply to the sixth form.

Also, in the sixth form:

- Improve the teaching in French so students are not underachieving.
- Ensure all students are taught the key study skills associated with being in the sixth form.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure students are taught religious education in the sixth form.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART A CONTINUED: SUMMARY OF THE SIXTH FORM REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is **good**, but the school receives a lot of money so **its cost-effectiveness is satisfactory**. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students now achieve very well in physical education and art and design as a result of very good teaching.
- Students underachieve in French because the teacher does not demand enough of them.
- The leadership of the assistant head of sixth form is ensuring that standards are continuing to rise.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

| Curriculum area | Evaluation |
|--|--|
| English, languages and communication | Provision in English literature is good . Teaching is good; gifted students produce work of a very high quality, although some others are allowed to be passive in lessons. Provision in French is unsatisfactory . Students work hard, but teachers do not allow them to progress quickly enough. |
| Mathematics | Provision in mathematics is good . The good level of knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts and students achieve well. Schemes of work are not developed sufficiently. |
| Science | Provision in biology is satisfactory . There are good relationships, but students are not really made to excel. Provision in vocational science is good . Students do well because the teaching is good and they enjoy the course. More could be demanded of students in Year 12. |
| Information and communication technology | Provision in ICT is good . Teaching is good and there is a wide range of courses available to meet the different needs of students. However, some students are not suitably qualified to start the course. |
| Humanities | Provision in geography is good . Standards are rising as a result of good teaching in Year 13; however, not enough emphasis is placed on discussion in lessons. Provision in sociology is satisfactory . Teaching is good, but achievement is only satisfactory because of unsatisfactory assessment. Provision in religious education is satisfactory . Students are eager to discuss their work, but are not given enough opportunities to take responsibility. |
| Visual and performing arts and media | Provision in art and design is very good . The new head of department has transformed the department. Students now achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. |
| Physical education | Provision in physical education is very good . Very good teaching leads to students achieving very well. |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Business | Provision in business is good . Teaching is good, but more could be done to improve basic skills. |
| Health and social care | Provision in health and social care is good . Teaching is good, but some students can only attend their work placements by missing lessons. |

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive good advice, guidance and support. Expectations of mature attitudes to work are reinforced well and the school goes to great lengths to meet students' requests for different courses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership of the sixth form is good and its management is satisfactory. The assistant head of sixth form is playing a leading role in raising standards, but not all heads of department have a good enough understanding of examination data.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are happy at the school. They like the teachers, the teaching, the range of courses and the way the school is run. Though they feel they are on courses that suit their abilities and career plans, they would like still better advice on careers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils join the school with standards of attainment that are below average and by the time they leave Year 11 they have achieved well and their standards are average. Parents are pleased with their children's progress and pupils point out that the school is known for its high standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 7 to 9, pupils do very well in ICT and music because of the very good teaching they receive.
- In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve very well in music.
- Pupils underachieve in the foreign languages because the curriculum is inadequate.
- Results are improving at a better rate than the national average at both key stages, despite the dip in 2002.
- Pupils' progress in the development of their literacy and language skills, although satisfactory, could be much better.
- The very highest attaining pupils do particularly well.

Commentary

1. 2002 was a relatively poor year for the school in terms of examination results. Up until 2002, examination results, both at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11, had been improving at a rate that was significantly better than the national average. However, the effects of reorganisation, including a massive rebuilding programme and large number of new staff, had a detrimental impact on the quality of education that the school provided in the short term and results fell to below average at the end of Year 9 and well below at GCSE. Nevertheless, pupils still did well at the end of Year 9, given their standards at the end of Year 6. There is no doubt, however, that pupils taking their GCSEs underachieved.
2. Even allowing for the difficulties caused by reorganisation, the school was shocked by the results, so the school's managers put into place several initiatives aimed at putting things right. 2003 saw the school come bouncing back. Results, both at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11, were the best in the school's history and continued, at an even greater pace, the improvement in results that was apparent before 2002. Results are likely to rise even further when the full impact of specialist sports college status is felt; all pupils now study physical education, religious education and citizenship to GCSE level, in addition to the subjects they already study.
3. In particular, the school tackled the underperformance of boys from a Pakistani background. This had been an issue since the previous inspection and the school was determined to ensure that these pupils made the same good progress as others. The school now provides very well for them; they receive specialist support in lessons. More importantly, the teacher responsible has been able to advise on the schemes of work for each department, so that areas of difficulty are spotted and dealt with before they can become problems in the classroom. The impact is clear in the examination results, where the performance of boys from a Pakistani background has improved significantly and they now achieve as well as others. Pupils from an Indian background did better than others in 2002, but while their standards were maintained in 2003, that of other groups of pupils were raised so that all achieved well.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 31.8 (34.4) | 33.3 (33.0) |
| Mathematics | 32.8 (34.2) | 34.7 (34.4) |
| Science | 32.3 (32.0) | 33.3 (33.1) |

There were 259 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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 | 37 (44) | 50 (48) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades | 85 (92) | 91 (91) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades | 94 (97) | 96 (96) |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 29.8 | 34.6 |

There were 258 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- By the end of Year 9, standards are average in most subjects. In ICT, music and physical education standards are above average, but in French and German they are below. Pupils do well in most subjects, and very well in ICT and music. They do as well as expected in geography, German and religious education, but underachieve in French as a result of an inadequate curriculum. A similar picture exists by the end of Year 11, although pupils' achievement is only satisfactory in English, mathematics and ICT. With the notable exception of French, the level of pupils' achievement can be clearly linked to the quality of teaching; so where teaching is good, achievement is good.
- Pupils make average progress in the development of their literacy and mathematical skills, but in terms of literacy and language it could be much better. The situation is only satisfactory because of the good work carried out jointly by the English and special educational needs departments, who work well together to raise standards. Nevertheless, the rest of the school's work is poorly co-ordinated in this area and the results are seen in the hit and miss approach to correcting basic errors in pupils' written work across the school.
- The very highest attaining pupils do very well at the school because they are given many opportunities to excel, especially in sport but also through being entered for examinations much earlier than is usually seen. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils; they meet the targets in their individual education plans and improve their social as well as their academic skills.

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with below average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 13, standards are average and students have achieved well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in physical education and art and design.
- Students underachieve in French.

Commentary

7. Results in the 2002 examinations were below average; the results for males were well below average and for females were average. However, there has been no clear pattern to results, for example, in 2001 males' results were well above average and females' results were average. Results improved significantly in 2003; both males and females achieved equally well.

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

| | School results | National results |
|--|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades | 97.3 | 94.8 |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 30.8 | 39.4 |
| Average point score per pupil | 200.1 (240.0) | 263.3 |

There were 78 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

8. Students achieve well in most subjects; they do best in physical education and art and design where the teaching is very good. However, students are underachieving in French because the teaching is unsatisfactory. Despite good teaching in sociology, students' achievement is only satisfactory because of inadequacies in assessment.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have good attitudes to learning. Their social development is very good and teachers also take good care to give them a very good sense of right and wrong. The school perseveres to improve matters when any pupil shows poor behaviour. As a result behaviour is satisfactory overall and is often good, both in lessons and around the school. Steps to promote spiritual and cultural understanding are, on balance, satisfactory so that pupils' awareness of such values develops satisfactorily. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many pupils are proud of their school and willingly live up to its expectations of hard work and good behaviour.
- Pupils of different ethnic backgrounds all get on well together. This is helped by the strong emphasis that the school gives to always showing respect for others.
- Attendance is improving because of the strong line the school now takes to discourage unnecessary absences.
- A minority of pupils lapse occasionally into poor behaviour so the number of fixed term exclusions is high.

Commentary

9. Pupils show good attitudes in many lessons. They usually enjoy practical activities best and many especially appreciate the range of physical education activities they are offered. The school's expectations have a positive effect on all pupils regardless of their different ethnic backgrounds, so that older ones in particular generally show a good sense of responsibility for their own learning. Occasionally, though, pupils lose interest, for instance if they are given a task that is boringly easy or far too hard for them. A few find it difficult to behave even in well-planned lessons. Teachers usually manage such pupils successfully, but there are occasional instances when they interrupt others' learning. Pupils with special educational needs on occasion respond very well to the encouragement of specialist staff.

10. The school's emphasis on high standards of personal behaviour and respect for others has rubbed off on the pupils, who are now even harsher critics of other pupils' behaviour than are the staff. Despite the usually good behaviour often observed, incidents of poor behaviour occur from time to time, both in lessons and around the school. Around one in fifteen pupils was excluded at least once during 2002-2003 because the school makes fair but very strict use of fixed term exclusions in response to such incidents. There were fewer exclusions than in the previous year, indicating that the school is achieving improvements in behaviour. There have been no permanent exclusions for some time because the school perseveres with efforts to help individuals behave better.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British | 1120 | 99 | |
| White – Irish | 1 | | |
| White – any other White background | 3 | | |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 5 | 11 | |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 2 | | |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 2 | 2 | |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 4 | | |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | 110 | 3 | |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani | 191 | 27 | |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 3 | | |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 15 | | |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 15 | 4 | |
| Black or Black British – African | 2 | | |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 3 | | |
| Chinese | 2 | | |
| Any other ethnic group | 17 | | |
| No ethnic group recorded | 6 | | |

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

11. Pupils are very confident members of the school community; a quality developed by the school through the very good opportunities for them to display initiative and leadership through the house system, which itself is a direct result of the school gaining specialist status. All heads of houses are students and each year group has responsibility for organising sporting and other activities, while their opinions and concerns are voiced through the different council meetings. Relations between pupils from differing ethnic backgrounds are positive and supportive – a point picked out by the pupils as one of the most important aspects of the school. Moral and ethical issues are highlighted very well and discussed in many subjects, so pupils are prepared to consider other viewpoints while also voicing their own opinions.

12. In 2001-2002 attendance was below that usually seen in other schools. In 2002-2003 it increased to 90.8 per cent; which is broadly average. This increase relates to recent very good efforts made in partnership with the education welfare service. Excellent attendance is awarded, while a panel interviews parents if a pupil's level of absence causes concern. Court action follows in the few cases where matters do not improve as a result of monitoring and support. All this is helping reduce absenteeism. Despite the improving attendance, more unauthorised absences are being recorded. This is because the school is now more careful to reject unreasonable excuses given for absence. There are concerns about the attitudes of those few pupils who still miss school without a good reason or who tend to arrive late to lessons.

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

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|---------------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 8.4 | School data | 1.4 |
| National data (secondary) | 7.8 | National data (secondary) | 1.2 |

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

Sixth form

Attitudes to learning are good. Students' relationships with each other and with staff are also good. They know well that others' religious and cultural values demand respect and their understanding of such values is satisfactory. Many respond willingly to the good opportunities that they get to contribute to the life of the school community. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are proud of their school and happy with the opportunities it gives them.
- Helped by the high expectations of their teachers, sixth form students usually show a mature sense of responsibility for their work.
- Students value the way that they come from a range of ethnic backgrounds and that the school enables them to mix and study together as a harmonious community.

Commentary

13. Students value the opportunity to join the sixth form and mostly respond well to the increased responsibility for self-organisation and the higher challenge of the work that they encounter. In lessons they usually arrive on time and work industriously, especially when the teacher is quick to remind them of what is expected. When teaching is very good, as in sports studies, their involvement can be outstanding, and they mostly show reasonable concentration even in lessons where the presentation is a bit flat. However, in some lessons a few Year 12 students are not yet putting their full energy into their work
14. Behaviour of sixth form students is usually very mature and sensible, in line with the school's expectations and strictly adhered to code of conduct. Occasionally, individuals show serious lapses and the school responds suitably. Four of the exclusions recorded in the past year were of sixth form students. Students who transfer from other schools tend to take time to adjust to their new environment but good steps are taken to ensure they understand the standards of behaviour required and, if necessary, to help them improve. The school goes to some lengths to ensure that new students possess the same attitude of respect for all as others, so members of the student body work harmoniously together.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good education; teaching, the curriculum and pastoral care are all of a good quality. There are satisfactory links with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good and leads to good learning. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in music throughout the school.
- Standards of discipline are good and teachers expect their pupils to do well.
- There is too much variation in the quality of marking.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to speak aloud in lessons.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 173 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 2 (1%) | 28 (16%) | 72 (42%) | 64 (37%) | 4 (2%) | 2 (1%) | 1 (1%) |

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

Commentary

15. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in most subjects, but very good in ICT and music and satisfactory in geography, the foreign languages and religious education. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in most subjects, but very good in music and satisfactory in English, mathematics, geography, ICT, the foreign languages and religious education.
16. Two aspects stand out in the teaching as being real strengths across the school. Firstly, there is very little misbehaviour in lessons because teachers are strict, but friendly. This is an important factor for parents in choosing the school and one reason why it is so popular. The ones who gain most from these good standards of discipline are the pupils themselves who are allowed to work without interruption from others and can receive the full benefit of the teachers' time. This element is not so noticeable in Years 10 and 11 in ICT, which is why teaching is not as good in these years as it is lower down the school.
17. The second important aspect in bringing about the good teaching is the way that teachers expect their pupils to work hard and to do well. A very high proportion both of parents and pupils feel that this is one of the most significant reasons for pupils achieving well, and they are correct. This is particularly the case in music, where pupils respond so enthusiastically to the demands made of them, and, it must be said, to the highly individual nature of the teaching, that they often do not want the lesson to end.

Example of outstanding practice

Making the highest attaining pupils think in science. An account of part of a chemistry lesson for Year 10 pupils.

The teacher had set a large number of questions for homework. Each consisted of just a list of two or more elements and the pupils had to work out the ionic formula for each combination. The teacher worked through the list of questions, getting different pupils to answer each one. Where an answer was incorrect, there was no false praise for coming close, just a brief "No" and on to the next pupil. If an answer was correct, the pupil had to explain how they got the answer; if incorrect, the teacher gave them another to work out on the spot so that he could check that their misunderstanding had been rectified. As the lesson progressed, the questions became more and more difficult, with combinations of elements that would form separate compounds in their own right before combining with other elements on the same list. Those who were struggling dropped out in order to do some corrections, but worked very quickly in order to catch up and join in again. Even the very highest attainers were now really being pushed to the limit, but others were desperate to work as hard as possible so they too could excel.

18. It is the level of challenge together with the pace of lessons that separates the good teaching from the satisfactory. Teaching in geography, for example, is satisfactory, but more could be demanded of the pupils and little thought is given to stretching the really talented pupils. Pupils do not do as well in geography as they do in most of their other subjects as a result. Most subjects, however, take good account of the needs of all pupils and adapt the work to meet them, especially those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented, and boys from a Pakistani background.
19. There are two areas where, although satisfactory, the school could do much better. The first is in developing pupils' speaking skills. Many pupils mumble when asked to speak in class and do not make their meaning clear. This is partly as a result of not being given enough opportunities to read aloud and speak to the class in lessons. Marking, too, is not as good as it could be. The problem with marking is one of inconsistency. Some teachers, such as in food and textiles, mark work extremely thoroughly but there are others, such as one in English, who have not marked work at all for some time. All teachers are provided with very good information on their pupils' past and predicted performance, but the way that this is used varies from the very good in music to the unsatisfactory in geography and religious education.

Sixth form

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in physical education and art and design.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in French.
- Teachers have a very good command of their subjects and good expectations of their students.

Commentary

20. Teaching is good in most subjects; it is satisfactory in biology and religious education, very good in physical education and art and design, but unsatisfactory in French.
21. Teachers have a very good command of their subjects and use this well to engage students or to challenge them to do well. In art and design, students are enthused by the quality of the teachers' practical demonstrations. Despite having a good command of the subject, the teacher of French does not use it much in lessons as the expectations of what students are capable of are too low.

22. Perhaps the biggest contrast in teaching can be found in the difference between the mundane lessons in biology and the lively and demanding lessons in physical education. In physical education, lessons are planned to include a range of activities that keep students interested and make them use different skills, whereas in biology, lessons are very pleasant, but take place at a very average pace.
23. Marking is better in the sixth form than the main school, because teachers more consistently give good advice to students on how to improve. Nevertheless, the assessment systems in sociology are not picking up quickly enough students who are starting to fall behind, and this is a major reason why some students are ungraded in examinations while others do very well.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9, very good in Years 10 and 11, but unsatisfactory in the sixth form. The opportunities for activities outside of lessons are good, but the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. The school has good accommodation and resources. The school offers a much better curriculum than at the time of the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Year 9 follow a course in ICT which enables them to gain an ICT qualification at least one year earlier than normally seen.
- There are many clubs and other activities available outside the school day.
- The school's philosophy of matching courses to students' needs is a real strength.
- Religious education is not provided for all students in the sixth form and is therefore a breach of statutory requirements.
- Students in the sixth form do not benefit from a compulsory enrichment course.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

24. Many pupils in Year 9 follow courses that enable them to gain GNVQ qualifications in ICT a year earlier than is usually seen. Pupils study a wide range of sports as a result of the school being a specialist sports college. There are several strengths in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. The school's philosophy of matching courses to pupils' needs is a real strength. A wide range of courses, including vocational courses, is provided for pupils. The school has identified pupils who would benefit from an alternative curriculum. Some of these have dropped their foreign language or design and technology to concentrate on improving their skills in other areas; all have been successful in public examinations. Another group of pupils spend two or three days each week on a work-related placement, but through skilful planning the school has still ensured that pupils receive the curriculum to which they are entitled. ICT is now used widely throughout the curriculum. This was a weakness noted in the previous report.
25. All pupils with special educational needs receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum. When withdrawal of pupils from lessons takes place, it is based on a clear rationale that shows benefit to the pupils involved.
26. There are, however, two issues with the curriculum that need addressing. Firstly, the extra tutorial period on a Tuesday morning is a waste of time that could be put to much better use. Secondly, and more importantly, the scheme of work in French does not cover enough work in the time available so pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
27. There are many clubs and activities that pupils can take part in outside of normal school hours. Apart from the many sporting activities on offer, there are also programmes in music, homework

clubs and many subject-based clubs. The school also provides many opportunities for pupils to gain extra help with their subjects outside the school day.

Sixth form

28. The school provides a wide range of courses, at different levels, that are suitable for the students staying on to the sixth form and provide a good basis for continuing their education. Students are able to mix and match their courses at different levels, or continue with four subjects to full A-level if they are particularly high attainers. Students with special educational needs have the full range of courses open to them. The school does not provide religious education for all students which is a breach of statutory requirements. The provision of extra activities outside of normal school hours is particularly good, especially through the sports college initiatives. However, students do not benefit from any form of a compulsory enrichment course such as physical education, religious education, general studies and key skills, which is most unusual. This has led to subjects planning their own courses on topics, such as how to write essays, when it would be much more efficient to teach them once to all students.

Care, guidance and support

Good attention is given to the care and welfare of pupils and to their personal guidance, including advice about career paths. The school takes good steps to find out pupils' views and to act on them. Advice to promote individual achievement is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attention to health and safety is good.
- Support is good for individuals with behavioural or other personal difficulties.
- Pupils are confident to ask for extra advice about their work, because they find their teachers are helpful and supportive.
- The school values pupils' views on important matters and takes good account of them.

Commentary

29. Day-to-day routines with regard to health and safety are good. In most instances very thorough policies and formal procedures underpin the continuation of this good practice. However, routines are not thorough enough for checking that the formal risk assessments carried out by subjects always cover the full range of their activities. Pupils point out that bullying does take place in the school, but, like their parents, they agree that staff take the issue very seriously and take swift and effective action to ensure that cases are not allowed to continue.
30. Induction is good, so that Year 7 pupils are helped to settle well to the school's routines. In all age groups varying personal needs are met; for instance, arrangements for reintegrating pupils after an exclusion are good. A computerised system is used well to identify and track problems with individual attendance. Well-detailed individual records contribute to other areas of pastoral support and satisfactory, though at times informal, arrangements allow such information to be shared between relevant staff. Rewards are used to good effect to highlight and encourage pupils' achievements, though these are not noted in records in the same way as problems are.
31. Older pupils are well informed about the range of routes open to them. Year 9 pupils receive suitable guidance when they choose their optional subjects for the next two years. More able pupils benefit from the 'fast track' courses offered. Others mention appreciatively the extra classes that are arranged to help them in various subjects. Pupils now in Year 10 are content about the choices they were given and about the way the school mostly managed to meet their preferences.

32. The school also takes good steps to consider pupils' views about other aspects of their life in school. For instance, following opinions expressed through the school council the school now has plans in hand for much-needed refurbishment of toilets.

Sixth form

Good attention is given to students' welfare and to their personal and educational guidance. Students have good opportunities to express their views about aspects of school life, and the school responds seriously to their ideas.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Expectations of mature behaviour and hard work are upheld consistently and contribute to students' achievements.
- Students find that teachers are very approachable and ready to give extra support with their work.
- The sixth form makes good and largely successful efforts to cater for students' preferences and abilities through the courses it offers.
- Students are encouraged to contribute ideas about the functioning of the school and there are important instances where this benefits both themselves and the whole school community.

Commentary

33. Students get good advance information about the expectations and opportunities offered in the sixth form. Staff make sure they consider other options open to them as well before making their final choice. A good range of courses is available in combinations that the school arranges to match individual needs as well as possible. Guidance about choice of sixth form courses is in most instances successful. There are just a few Year 12 students who, in occasional lessons, are, at this early stage, low in confidence or motivation.
34. Ongoing guidance is good. Teachers readily find time to give students extra support if they ask and at the same time promote their sense of personal responsibility for their work. Independence is also encouraged by efforts to ensure that students make good use of their private study periods. The half-termly monitoring system is used well to identify problems with students' progress or attitudes, so that extra support can be given to any individuals who need it. However, support given during tutor periods to extend self-review, self-management and study skills is too variable in quality.
35. Students are well informed about the range of higher education options open to them. Those completing university applications speak positively of the advice and help they get for this process. Similarly, those following vocational courses get good guidance and advice in the course of their studies.
36. Students are encouraged to express their opinions about issues that affect the wider school community, through the school council and other means. For instance, selected students helped with the development of the very good behaviour and race relations policies that contribute to the life of all involved with the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Satisfactory partnership is developed with parents, and the school is making good efforts to strengthen this. Links with other schools and with the local and wider community are good, with the sports college status having a considerable impact.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sports links with other schools and organisations are extensively developed. This benefits pupils and helps the wider community considerably as well.
- Good efforts are made to increase parents' interest and support for the school's efforts.
- In some instances the annual reports to parents are not clear enough about what pupils have learnt and the progress they have made towards their targets.

Commentary

37. Parents are mostly happy with the work of the school. Staff make good efforts to foster the contribution of all parents. For example, parents of all pupils are told at the start of the year about homework expectations and tutors regularly check that pupils' planners are used effectively to share information between home and school. Pastoral staff readily contact parents if concerns are identified about any pupil. Currently the school, in partnership with education social workers, is making very good efforts to improve parents' support in cases where attendance is too low.
38. Many parents attend the consultation evenings offered for the younger age groups, but their interest in these meetings dwindles, so that half at best come in Year 11. Parents of Asian pupils in particular tend to stay away despite efforts made to encourage them. Parents mostly get satisfactory written information about their child's progress and achievements. However, there are odd instances where annual reports are not clear enough. For instance, the details included in physical education reports are well presented but are too limited. They say too little about the individual's strengths and areas for development. Good ongoing efforts are made to consider parents' views and to respond to their needs. As a result arrangements for a new regular newsletter are well in hand and a different format for meetings between parents and staff is being tried out.
39. Links with the main feeder primary schools are very strong with regard to physical education. Opportunities arising from the school's sports college status are exploited very effectively. Well-established partnerships are helping primary teachers in the main feeder schools add to the breadth and quality of their pupils' experience in this subject. These supportive links are now extended to benefit pupils at many more schools in the local area. In other subjects links with feeder schools are mostly satisfactory, but boosted by events such as 'technology day'.
40. Sports' college links with the community are also developed well to benefit pupils. Their participation in community sports is encouraged through links with a range of local clubs. The range of visitors who contribute to lessons and assemblies is numerous. Partnership with local employers is exploited to good effect with regard to work experience for Year 10 pupils. As well as completing diaries of their experience, they carry out a relevant research project that counts towards a citizenship qualification.

Sixth form

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Suitable links with the community and with universities are in place. Good links are in place with other local sixth forms, to add to the breadth of courses offered to students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good efforts are made to enlist parents' support if there are problems with a student's work or attitude.
- A confederation arrangement results in good links with other sixth forms in the area.

Commentary

41. Parents are happy with the way the sixth form provides for students. Appropriate reporting arrangements give them satisfactory information about students' achievements, though annual reports lack details of the standards reached. Senior sixth form staff contact parents quickly to gain their support if concerns are identified, for instance through the regular reviews undertaken by subject teachers.
42. The necessary links with businesses and other organisations are in place to add to the breadth of students' experience on vocational courses. Similarly, visits arranged to colleges and universities increase students' understanding of possible career routes. Students from Thornton are mostly happy with the options available on their own site and do not make much use of the opportunities to follow courses elsewhere within the local confederation. However, students from other sixth forms benefit from the extended choice of courses that access to Thornton allows them.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good; there is good leadership and governance, with satisfactory management.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good.
- Leadership of physical education and the way that the school has used its status as a specialist sports college are outstanding.
- The systems for checking up on what is going on in the school are not detailed enough to pick up small issues and build on really good practice.
- Heads of department do not all understand what examination data is telling them.

Commentary

43. The headteacher's leadership stands out at the school. He has steered the school through a large reorganisation, seen the number of pupils and students double and, despite the dip in 2002, seen examination results rise at a faster rate than the national average; results at GCSE have more than doubled since his appointment. At all times he has stuck to his principles of high standards of discipline and ensuring that all pupils are treated equally. Nevertheless, he has been successful because he has the support of a senior management team, whose skills and expertise complement one another's and who are there to provide a healthy challenge to his ideas. They themselves have demonstrated equally as good leadership in their areas of responsibility, as can be seen in the improvements in areas such as the curriculum and pupils' personal development since the previous inspection.
44. The dip in results in 2002 can be blamed entirely on the reorganisation of education in the local education authority (LEA) and its subsequent problems for the school. The school virtually

doubled in size, without the necessary accommodation as the building of new classrooms had not been completed. As a result, a significant amount of time from lessons was lost, as teachers and pupils had to make their way around a small village of mobile classrooms. In addition, and probably more importantly, the school employed a significant number of new staff. These staff came from middle schools where there was no teaching to GCSE level and they received no special training before taking up their new posts. However, they did bring with them a vast amount of teaching experience from Years 7 and 8, which has greatly benefited the school.

45. Leadership at middle management level is generally good, with many heads of department and pastoral team leaders sharing the same emphasis on improvement as the headteacher. Nevertheless, there are two areas that stand out for completely different reasons. In the foreign languages, the leadership of the head of department is unsatisfactory; the reasons for underachievement in French have not been dealt with and results continue to be among the worst in the school. Where the reasons have been identified, as by the head of German, actions have been taken and standards are improving significantly. In physical education, on the other hand, leadership is outstanding. The department is a model for the whole school in all of its work. The whole team share the enthusiasm of the director of sport and his drive to improve standards. Much of the work of the department is highly innovative, such as all pupils studying for GCSE, and the range of opportunities for pupils is exceptional.

Example of outstanding practice

The impact of sports college status on the whole school

The outstanding leadership of the director of sport, supported by a strong, committed team, has created a vibrant sports college ethos with an expectation of high standards. Excellent clarity of vision, focused on improving standards of attainment, is a key feature of his leadership, and the department's influence on the rest of the school. Sports college status has enabled the physical education department to become a role model for the school. Attitudes and behaviour have improved. Pupils are highly motivated by the range of sporting opportunities that the sports college provides; they wear their uniform with pride. The high standards of behaviour and active participation expected by the department underpin the ethos of the school, exemplified by the flourishing house system. Good practice in the department is spearheading whole-school initiatives. Monitoring of teaching including mutual classroom observation, annual departmental self-review and rigorous monitoring of the subject's performance are but some of the initiatives already adopted by this successful department. Standards are improving, and it is no coincidence that the school has achieved its best external examination results, ever, this year.

46. School policies and practices are not always applied consistently, however, owing to deficiencies in the methods that are used to check on what is happening in the school. Where problems are identified, the actions taken to investigate and put things right are very thorough, but there is not enough formal and systematic monitoring going on to spot smaller issues, such as those in religious education, or to share the really good practice that exists in the school. Probably the biggest variation lies in the way that heads of department use information from assessments such as examination results. Some, such as those in music and physical education, use it very well to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of, while others do not really understand what the data is telling them.

Sixth form

The leadership of the sixth form is good and its management is satisfactory. Governance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The assistant head of sixth form is playing a leading role in raising standards.
- Heads of department do not all understand what examination data is telling them.
- Governors do not ensure that all students study religious education.

Commentary

47. The head of sixth form was not present for the inspection, However, it is clear that the assistant head of sixth form is playing a leading role in driving the sixth form forward. The curriculum developments in the sixth form have been particularly important in ensuring that all students can now do as well as each other, since specific courses have been put in place to meet the needs of specific groups. Many aspects, particularly to do with students' attitudes to work, are managed very well by the assistant head of sixth form. However, the systems for checking that students are achieving as well as they should are only satisfactory now; the school changed its system to one that relied on data from the LEA and this was found to be ineffective. The school has now returned to its former, and more accurate, system, but the same variations in management and the understanding of data exist in departments as are apparent in the main school.
48. Despite carrying out their duties well in the main school, and for the most part in the sixth form, governors have not ensured that the school teaches religious education to all students.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

| Income and expenditure (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Total income | 4972679 |
| Total expenditure | 5139676 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 3424 |

| Balances (£) | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Balance from previous year | 433312 |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 266315 |

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**.

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------|--------------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Good | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Satisfactory |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Satisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Satisfactory |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' reading comprehension is a relative strength.
- Pupils do well in Years 7 to 9 because the teaching is good.
- The quality of some marking is poor and does not show pupils how to raise their standards.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 11 not entered for English literature is relatively high so they do not have the opportunity to gain a GCSE qualification.

Examination results

49. In the three years up to 2001 results in National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, were improving dramatically. In 2002 they dropped down to below average, but in 2003 they improved to the best in the school's history.
50. In 2002, GCSE results in English were below the national average but in 2003 they improved. Results in English literature were above the national average in 2002 and pupils did well compared to their performances in other subjects, but the proportion of Year 11 pupils entered for the examination was more than a quarter less than the national average. In 2003 results were lower than those obtained in 2002, again with only a relatively small proportion of the year being entered for the subject. However, the papers for all pupils have been sent for re-marking by the examination board and, to date, all those returned have had their grades increased.

Standards and achievement

51. By the end of Year 9, pupils have made better than expected progress in their reading and writing, and satisfactory progress in their speaking and listening. Whilst higher attaining pupils have good speaking and listening skills, for many middle and lower attaining pupils this is an area of relative weakness. Many express themselves briefly, possess a limited vocabulary and have difficulty in explaining their ideas more fully when asked to do so. These differences between pupils of different attainment are also to be seen in written work. Higher attainers can adapt what they write for different purposes but a significant proportion of other pupils do not possess this flexibility. Reading is a relative strength. Pupils readily understand what they read and a number have sufficient insight to be able to make accurate predictions, for example about how a plot might develop. Whilst few pupils read aloud with good expression, many pupils read fluently and all except the lowest attainers can read independently.

52. In Years 10 and 11 pupils improve their skills at a rate that means they remain in line with the national average. Higher attainers analyse complex topics and produce lengthy, well-structured essays and reports on a variety of topics. However, the work of lower attaining pupils contains errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar and their vocabulary is limited. Pupils continue to broadly understand the content of what they read but communicating their responses clearly and fully in writing remains a difficulty for middle and lower attainers.

Teaching and learning

53. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. When teaching is most effective, lessons are well planned; relevant, stimulating resources are used; pupils understand the aims of the lesson; and the work is conducted at a brisk pace. In a number of lessons 'starter' sessions are used to briefly revise or introduce a topic and ensure that all pupils are totally aware of what is going to be taught and its relevance. Such sessions are more prevalent in Years 7 to 9 and the teaching is better as a result. Lessons are all the more effective when pupils are required to be active, such as when pupils are able to clarify their thinking through well-planned group discussion. Most teachers maintain effective discipline by ensuring that lessons are well paced and are suitably pitched to provide an appropriate level of challenge. This, in turn, creates an environment in which all pupils learn. When teaching is less effective or unsatisfactory, the work is too easy for the age and capability of the pupils and so they do not make progress. When tasks are set without sufficient explanation or illustration, pupils do not understand what is expected of them, their attention wanders and what they produce is unsatisfactory. Most of the marking is good and shows pupils how to improve. However, some marking is poor and this means pupils do not know what to do to improve and their motivation diminishes.

Leadership and management

54. The head of department is a good role model who has high expectations of her pupils. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy has been adopted in the teaching of English and has helped to raise standards. Teaching is monitored but this has not yet resulted in some unsatisfactory practice being eliminated. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Standards of literacy are broadly average. An important contributory factor in achieving this has been the good level of co-operation between the English and special needs departments, who have addressed the needs of many lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 by following the recommendations contained in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy. However, other subjects lack this clarity of focus and there is inconsistent practice. In general, there is no systematic programme of study that results in pupils being required to develop a full range of reading and writing skills. The work of many pupils is marred by errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar but many of these are overlooked in teachers' marking. Teachers have received some training in the teaching of literacy as a basic skill, but there is no whole-school monitoring of its implementation.

Modern foreign languages

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

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Standards | Below average | Below average |
| Achievement | Unsatisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership | Unsatisfactory |
| Management | Unsatisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Unsatisfactory |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In French, results have fallen over the past three years because there is not enough emphasis on improving standards.
- In German, results are improving because the leadership is good.
- Schemes of work do not allow middle ability pupils, especially boys, to progress quickly enough in French.
- Pupils are well behaved and relationships are good.

Examination results

56. In French, examination results were average in 2002 and declined in 2003. In German, results in 2002 were well below average but improved in 2003. Pupils do less well in both French and German than in other subjects they take in the school.

Standards and achievement

57. By the end of Year 9, pupils are working below the level that would be expected of them in both languages. This is mostly due to the fact that pupils have not covered all the work necessary to reach the higher levels. For example, some pupils, especially those of middle ability, have a very shaky understanding of different tenses and they write with too much inaccuracy. Several have not progressed beyond very basic statements about what the weather is like or saying who is in their family. Most higher ability pupils speak well within the limits of the topics that they have covered. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length or from memory. Pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as their peers.
58. By the end of Year 11, pupils' skills are below average in both French and German, especially in listening. Higher attaining pupils produce some good quality written work as part of their coursework and make progress in speaking, but other pupils, especially boys, do not have sufficient understanding of grammar or knowledge of vocabulary to enable them to gain high grades in examinations. There is, however, a range of levels of expectations among the staff of both how much of the syllabus will be covered and to what depth. This means that some pupils, especially in French, are continually working with very short sentences and rarely manage questions, whereas others are pushed well beyond this. In the current Year 10 where languages are optional the few pupils who study French or German are following a programme which is much more carefully designed to meet their needs but they are still building on weak basic foundations from previous years.

Teaching and learning

59. Teachers plan lessons that have clear aims and use carefully selected resources and activities that are interesting for pupils. In German, for example, pupils in Year 7 take part in games such as 'pass the parcel' alphabet which they enjoy greatly and which allow them to use the language they have been taught. In Year 8 French, pupils are also beginning to look at how words are

spelled and concentrate on how to pronounce them. Nevertheless, too often the teacher dominates the lesson so that pupils, especially those of middle ability and boys, do not have enough opportunity to speak or to write the language. Pupils do not always record their work systematically so that they can refer later to notes that they have made. Most pupils listen to tapes regularly but they often miss out on hearing French or German used by the teacher for instructions because much of the teaching is done in English. Most teachers manage the behaviour of pupils well, expecting them to pay attention, and relationships are good.

Leadership and management

60. The department now provides a worse quality of education than that at the time of the previous inspection. Behaviour and attitudes have improved but the problem of falling standards in French has not been addressed. Although results have been analysed, insufficient has been done to address the issues identified such as the underachievement of boys and of middle groups by adapting the curriculum to meet their needs. The head of department has provided schemes of work which are inadequate; too much time, for example, is given over to teaching individual topics rather than going on to more work. This means teachers produce at least satisfactory lessons, and often better, but they are not covering the amount of work in the long term to allow pupils to reach the standards of which they are capable. In German, however, the picture is much better with results rising and a more effective policy for addressing the weaknesses identified.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------|--------------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Good | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Satisfactory |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Satisfactory |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do better than expected as a result of good teaching.
- Good leadership and management result in improving standards and teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- There are good methods of monitoring and tracking pupils' progress so pupils can see how they are progressing.
- Schemes of work in Years 10 and 11 are nowhere near as good as those in Years 7 to 9.

Examination results

61. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were below average. There was an improvement in results in 2003, particularly in the proportion reaching Level 6 or above. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average. The overall results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were similar to those of the previous year, although there was a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils who achieved A*-C grades.

Standards and achievement

62. By the end of Year 9, pupils' numerical skills are average. Pupils can calculate the circumferences and areas of circles that will prepare them well for future work. Middle attaining pupils can add and subtract proper fractions and extend their basic numeracy skills to multiplying and dividing mixed numbers. The higher attainers manage this well, but the lower attainers have difficulty in dividing mixed numbers. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils analyse problems well when completing coursework. They apply the techniques that they have learnt in their mathematics lessons. Their use of trigonometry and Pythagoras's theorem when solving problems demonstrates that they have a good understanding of both concepts.

Teaching and learning

63. Teachers generally plan their lessons well and have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. They share clear objectives with the pupils so that pupils understand what it is expected they should achieve in the lessons. In the majority of lessons, teachers plan a balance between different types of activities to maintain the interest of pupils. This is better in lessons in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The very good quality of planning in Years 7 to 9 has not been followed through in Years 10 and 11. Schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 are not developed sufficiently to give teachers guidelines on teaching methods and resources so that the quality of teaching can be improved further. In the best lessons, teachers ask pupils to explain how they worked out the answers. This encourages pupils to explain what they are doing and promotes an improvement in learning. However, there are occasions when teachers give answers or ask for them without asking, "How did you do that?" Homework is set regularly and generally supports the work that pupils carry out in class well; it consolidates the new learning that takes place in the lessons. Marking and assessment are generally good; however, there are some errors in spelling that are not corrected.

Leadership and management

64. Although the overall leadership and management of the department are good, the quality is much better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. The Key Stage 3 co-ordinator has developed strategies for raising attainment at Key Stage 3 and there is a clear vision for improvement. Teachers work well together and are keen to raise standards. There is an effective policy for delivering the National Numeracy Strategy and this supports teachers' planning well; however, this has not yet been extended to Key Stage 4. Results of national examinations are analysed thoroughly so that strategies can be developed to improve achievement. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' performance as they progress through the school and these are used effectively to place pupils in groups so that work set is at an appropriately challenging level for all pupils. There is a variety of extra-curricular activities that supports pupils well, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are entered for national mathematics competitions at both key stages and this enhances their mathematics. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. The strategy for teaching mathematics as a basic skill in subjects is satisfactory. There is a good numeracy strategy in place that supports other subjects well. There is also a good booklet that provides guidance for pupils when working at home. Geography contributes well to pupils' mathematics. Pupils use data to produce graphs showing development issues. In other lessons they measure distances on a plan and demonstrate a secure understanding of scale. Art also benefits from the strategy and there are good units on recognising shapes in pattern. Pupils manipulate shapes very effectively and use shape and space in relation to art in nature.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Satisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Satisfactory |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is well informed, carefully planned and skillful, enabling pupils of all abilities to learn effectively and do well in science.
- Higher attainers do particularly well in all years.
- In Years 10 and 11 there is a particularly wide range of courses, including the separate science subjects and an intermediate GNVQ course, so that all pupils can follow a course which is right for them.
- There is a shortage of variety in the learning activities that pupils experience.

Examination results

66. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were below the national average. However, results improved significantly in 2003. Results in the 2002 GCSE science examinations were also below the national average and girls gained more grades A*-C than boys. These results also showed a significant improvement in 2003.

Standards and achievement

67. Most pupils in all year groups have at least a basic understanding of the topics they are studying. Higher attainers do particularly well in all years. Middle and lower attainers often have speaking and literacy skills that are below average; they find it difficult to interpret the precise meaning of unfamiliar questions and do not use exactly the right words when trying to give spoken and written answers. This causes particular difficulties in Years 10 and 11 where questions are more demanding and more detailed and precise answers are required. Pupils of all abilities do better in investigation work than in other parts of the course. This is the result of careful teaching, pupils' good use of ICT to present their findings and opportunities that are offered after school for pupils to improve their work if necessary. Overall, pupils do better in science than might be expected from their test results when they enter the school.

Teaching and learning

68. Teachers have good subject knowledge, manage pupils well and provide clear explanations and appropriate activities to enhance pupils' learning. There are some good examples of 'starter' activities so pupils need to think from the very beginning of the lesson. In some lessons there is particularly good use of the results of homework to determine what needs to be done next. In a Year 10 physics lesson, for example, the teacher picked up pupils' individual problems with calculations while allowing those who had found the exercise straightforward the independence to find out for themselves about the next topic. In an outstanding lesson for Year 10, there was particularly demanding and challenging questioning, requiring pupils to explain what they had done with their ionic formulas and why. Pupils were constantly moved on to consider more and more difficult situations so that they were thinking and working to the very limit of their capability and their learning was very quick and secure.

69. Some lessons, although satisfactory overall, nevertheless have weaknesses. Many pupils in middle and lower attaining groups have weak listening skills and find it difficult to concentrate fully when the teacher is speaking. Although the teacher's explanations are generally clear and concise, there is sometimes, particularly at the end of the lesson, not enough emphasis on the major points that pupils need to remember. The result is that these pupils often find it difficult to recall facts from earlier lessons. Although individual lessons contain several changes of activity to hold pupils' interest, there is often a strong emphasis on 'question and answer' and the teacher's explanation followed by written answers to confirm pupils' understanding. Teachers make relatively little use of, for example, reading aloud, discussion in small groups and other techniques that would help improve speaking and literacy skills.

Leadership and management

70. The head of department leads by example, particularly in the high quality of his teaching and his enthusiasm for the subject. The department works well together as a team and shares a strong commitment to improvement; the implementation of different examination courses to meet the different needs of pupils has been particularly successful. However, until very recently, there has not been enough monitoring of teaching and learning to help to maximise the proportion of good lessons and to enable good ideas to be identified and shared. Improved arrangements for monitoring are now in place but these are yet to have a real impact on the consistency of teaching quality. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good**.

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Standards | Above average | Average |
| Achievement | Very good | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Very good | Satisfactory |

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in Years 7 to 9 as a result of very good teaching.
- Very good leadership has resulted in very good progress being made since the previous inspection.
- The school has very good ICT facilities so pupils can use computers in and out of lessons.
- Teachers do not always ensure all pupils are listening, so there is some messing around in Years 10 and 11.

Examination results

71. In 2002, only a small number of pupils took the GCSE short course in ICT and national comparisons are not valid; however, all pupils gained a pass at grade C or above. In 2003, results improved significantly.

Standards and achievement

72. By the end of Year 9, pupils' practical skills are above average overall, although their ability to use computers to control devices is below average because there are not enough opportunities for them to use control equipment. Their understanding of the theory associated with the subject is above average, for example when using screen shots to enhance their evidence trails needed for GNVQ coursework. Lower attainers make the same good progress as others because teachers match the work well to the needs of these pupils. Pupils who are gifted and talented

are provided with the opportunity to gain a GNVQ in ICT at least one year earlier than normally seen; these pupils achieve very well indeed. By the end of Year 11, pupils' skills are average. They produce good quality presentations and use email with ease. Their ability to use spreadsheets and databases is satisfactory. Above all else, pupils have the depth of knowledge and understanding to enable them to succeed in examinations.

Teaching and learning

73. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject; they use this well to really challenge pupils and ask searching questions. For example, in a Year 9 class, lower attainers were asked to analyse and discuss the relationship between colour and audience needs. The teacher did not accept superficial answers, even from this lower attaining group. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and also how pupils should behave.
74. In Years 10 and 11, teachers know the requirements of the examination syllabuses well; this enables them to provide exemplars of good practice and informs pupils how they can improve their coursework. When teaching is less than satisfactory, teachers do not ensure all pupils are listening to instructions. This happened in a Year 10 lower attaining class, when pupils were messing around and playing games, resulting in pupils not knowing how to proceed. In all years, marking is detailed with comments that help pupils to improve.

Leadership and management

75. The lack of ICT across the curriculum and the low standards attained was a key issue noted in the previous report. Very good leadership has enabled the department to make very good progress – from an unsatisfactory position at the time of the previous inspection, through to a position of strength. Standards are much improved as a result of the good teaching.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. The use of computers in other areas of the curriculum is good. The ratio of pupils to computers is better than the national average; this allows discrete ICT lessons to take place as well enabling pupils to practise their skills in other subjects. ICT is used particularly effectively in science, where pupils use data-logging systems very effectively to support their investigations.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership | Satisfactory |
| Management | Satisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Satisfactory |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not do as well in geography as they do in their other subjects; their achievement is satisfactory rather than good.
- Teachers emphasise the development of mathematical skills and pupils apply these well in coursework.
- The quality of many pupils' work is reduced by weaknesses in grammatical accuracy.
- The assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 11 does not give a reliable picture about how well they are doing and how they can improve.

Examination results

77 .Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were below average and were similar in 2003. Pupils did not do as well in geography as they did in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

78. By the end of Year 9, pupils have developed a wide range of skills such as using atlases and maps to locate and read information. They know about the development of countries and explore ideas about the notion of fair trade between countries, but many do not develop their answers enough. Higher attaining pupils write clear accurate accounts but the writing of many others is weak because they do not write in sentences, and make frequent spelling errors.
79. By the end of Year 11 pupils have increased their range of knowledge of countries and of the local area. They apply knowledge and skills to first-hand research of Pennine streams for GCSE coursework, but on other occasions do not link theoretical study to places studied. Pupils have good skills in note making and organising work, but many are weak in understanding the requirements of questions and applying knowledge under test conditions.

Teaching and learning

80. In Year 9, pupils are taught by specialist teachers. The aims of lessons are clear and classes well managed so pupils know what they are supposed to be doing and can get on with it without being disturbed. Teachers plan lessons but do not incorporate sufficient strategies to meet the different needs of pupils, particularly the highest attainers. Assessment is unsatisfactory because arrangements to measure standards against National Curriculum requirements are not established. Written work is checked regularly but there is insufficient attention given to the quality of the work and to how pupils are to improve. Teachers emphasise the development of mathematical skills and pupils apply these well in coursework. Pupils appreciate the regular guidance that teachers provide, but how to answer examination questions and how to recall facts need to be taught more formally. The teacher often dominates lessons so pupils do not develop enough independence and self-reliance.

Leadership and management

81. The curriculum is satisfactory, but the schemes of work need to be 'customised' to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. The subject handbook provides clear guidance to teachers and good support is given to new teachers so that they integrate quickly into the work of the school. Standards are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Good |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their good knowledge and enthusiasm to plan interesting lessons.
- Pupils' attitudes are good because of teachers' high expectations of behaviour and work.
- Some marking of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 lacks detailed advice on how to improve.
- The teaching of literacy is satisfactory but there is room for improvement.

Examination results

82. Examination results were below average in 2002 and were not consistent with the higher overall trend of recent years, although pupils' achievement was satisfactory. Results improved in 2003.

Standards and achievement

83. By the end of Year 9, pupils reach average standards in both their oral and written work and this represents good achievement. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment answer confidently and accurately the questions that teachers ask in class to check the extent of their knowledge and understanding. By the end of Year 11 those pupils who choose to continue with history produce good quality written work, especially in coursework assignments. They interpret historical sources well and generally select relevant information to support their opinions, although lower attaining pupils can miss out on higher marks by failing to answer in sufficient depth. Pupils with special education needs make as good progress as others because teachers deal well with their needs.

Teaching and learning

84. Teachers are unfailingly enthusiastic about history and this promotes an enjoyment of the subject in most pupils. Teachers know their subject well and consistently expect high standards of behaviour and work from pupils from the start of Year 7. They plan lessons that are clearly focused and move briskly from task to task, maintaining pupils' interest. Consequently, throughout the school, pupils need little reminding of the need to focus on their work in lessons. This calm but purposeful atmosphere, together with welcoming rooms and good resources, makes for a good learning environment that greatly benefits pupils, and around half of Year 9 pupils each year opt to continue with the subject to GCSE level. Whilst teachers make some use of strategies for improving pupils' literacy skills this is an aspect of teaching that could be further developed.
85. The good standard of teaching continues throughout Years 10 and 11, and the interest of pupils is maintained. Teachers focus well on the techniques pupils need to be successful in examinations and their marking of pupils' work is thorough, providing helpful comments that inform pupils how to improve their marks. The same thoroughness is not always evident in Years 7 to 9, where some marking lacks the detail necessary for pupils to understand how to improve.

Leadership and management

86. The commitment of the head of department to high standards is visible in all aspects of the subject, and the subject teachers unfailingly share that commitment. Departmental procedures and policies, though sometimes lacking in overt detail, clearly convey the expectation of high standards. The clarity of vision has been instrumental in ensuring the effective induction, in a very short period of time, of two newly qualified teachers. They receive good support and confirm that the regular discussions they have with senior colleagues supply the helpful detail about policies that is not yet in the subject handbook.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership | Satisfactory |
| Management | Unsatisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Good |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs and values.
- There is no system of assessment that accurately measures pupils' achievement.
- Pupils have no opportunity to enrich their understanding through visits or first hand discussion with people of faith.

Examination results

87. Pupils sat the short course GCSE in religious studies for the first time in 2003. Almost half the pupils gained grades A*-C and some girls achieved the highest grades. Results for boys were significantly lower than the girls.

Standards and achievement

88. By the end of Year 9, pupils can identify the key features of the religion they are studying, but their recall of earlier work is weak. With encouragement from the teacher, they make links between religions, through common practices such as ceremonies to mark the 'coming of age', and marriage ceremonies. Pupils have an average understanding of the rituals and emotions surrounding death and can reflect on their own beliefs. Their projects on a famous individual, however, while containing much detail, do not demonstrate understanding of the effect of belief on their lives or the contribution they made.
89. By the end of Year 11, pupils recognise that there are different viewpoints on ethical issues and higher attaining pupils provide simple reasons for their own views. They are ready to discuss and give their opinions, although written responses are limited. They consider arguments for and against the existence of God that were considered briefly in Year 9. Their recall is weak, however, and discussion about the validity of the arguments is generally lacking in thought and balance. Boys are often reluctant to become involved in the lesson and so are unable to develop understanding of the values of others, a factor which is significant in the differences between boys and girls at examination level. Some groups have a significant gap between lessons and this makes it difficult for them to remember previous work.

Teaching and learning

90. Teachers' clear expectations ensure a good working environment and the responses of pupils are treated with respect. As a result, pupils are co-operative and respond well. Good subject knowledge enables teachers to give clear guidance and provide the detail that gives added interest to lessons. In the best lessons teachers make the objectives clear at the start, enabling pupils to review and evaluate their success. Teachers provide good opportunities to pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and values.
91. Teachers involve pupils actively in their lessons; however, where they do not ensure that the level of pupils' effort is high enough, achievement is reduced. As a result work can appear satisfactory, but lacks depth and understanding of the issues. Pupils have the opportunity to complete one extended research project each year in Years 7 to 9; however, the purpose of the project is unclear. The biography of Gandhi, for example, failed to identify the link between his faith and his fight for equality for all. Generally, pupils do not get enough written work, so teachers are unable to assess pupils' understanding or monitor their progress adequately. Marking does not identify areas for improvement or support the development of their literacy skills.

Leadership and management

92. Leadership of religious education is satisfactory; the development of examination courses has raised the profile of the department and increased pupil motivation. Standards are now considerably higher as all are receiving their entitlement to the subject. However, insufficient emphasis is placed upon checking the quality of teaching, and the result is inconsistency. Assessment opportunities are identified in schemes of work, but there is no expectation that these are completed, and they are not used to check on the progress of different groups or individuals. Although there are good opportunities for reflection leading to spiritual and moral development, there are no first hand experiences through visits to places of worship or interviews with believers. Contributions to whole-school initiatives such as ICT and literacy development are unplanned and not consistent across the groups.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------------|
| Standards | Average | Above average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership | Satisfactory |
| Management | Good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Good |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching.
- Assessment practices in food and textiles are particularly good and result in the effective monitoring of pupils' performance.
- There are some instances where the work is too easy for pupils.
- The lack of overall co-ordination for design and technology results in missed opportunities for sharing good practice and developing the subject as a whole.

Examination results

93. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were average; girls performed better than boys. Results in the 2003 examinations improved significantly and place design and technology as one of the best performing subjects in the school.

Standards and achievement

94. By the end of Year 9, pupils' making skills are average. They use a variety of tools and equipment accurately and with confidence in all material areas. Designing skills are not as good as making overall; however, pupils work closely to a design brief and specification and carry out detailed research and analysis tasks. A strong feature of food technology lessons is the way that teachers build in industrial practices into the activities. By the end of Year 11, standards of designing and making are above average. Pupils' work is characteristically detailed, thorough and well presented.

Teaching and learning

95. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers. Lessons are well paced and have clear learning objectives. A structured programme throughout Years 7 to 9 provides pupils with the opportunity to experience a wide range of materials and processes that capture the interest of pupils of all abilities; pupils with special educational needs learn at a rate that is similar to all other pupils. Pupils of all abilities are challenged, teachers usually have high expectations and assessments are used to help pupils' learning improve; this is a particular strength of food and textiles where clear targets for improvement are identified and shared with pupils. In materials other than food and textiles, the marking of work does not identify such clear targets, so pupils do not make as much progress, as they are not aware of what they need to do in as much detail. There are, however, the odd instances where work is too easy in the lower years and pupils are given tasks such as copying or tracing. A strong feature of pupils' coursework in all subjects is the obvious pride and effort that they have put into producing it.

Leadership and management

96. There is no overall leadership for the whole of design and technology. Separate heads of department lead both food and textiles, and resistant materials and graphics. Whilst the two departments are managed well and they liaise closely for the courses in Years 7 to 9, leadership is only satisfactory because there is no definitive direction and vision for education in the subject. This is because the two contributory departments are too disparate, even to the extent that they have separate action plans for future development. In consequence, pupils' experiences and expectations in design and technology are variable and learning opportunities developed in one area are not reinforced in the other. Nevertheless, good progress has been made since the previous inspection; the standard of pupils' work has improved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Very good leadership and management have turned around the department's performance.
- Marking is not consistent across classes.
- Teachers do not encourage pupils to use ICT sufficiently or to be more independent.

Examination results

97. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average. There were very serious staffing difficulties prior to 2002. Pupils were taught by a variety of supply teachers who did not have the relevant expertise. GCSE results in 2003 were much improved in 2003 and similar to those in other subjects.

Standards and achievement

98. By the end of Year 9, pupils' drawing skills are above average, especially when producing portraits. However, their relatively limited control when painting means that some finished work lacks accuracy; this is also true of homework. Pupils are particularly good at exploring the art of other cultures and using it in their work.
99. There is a very significant difference between the GCSE results in 2002 and standards in the present Year 11, which are average. By the end of Year 11, pupils use a good range of shading techniques very well to achieve tone, texture and three-dimensional effects. They have a good understanding of what constitutes good composition. Their practical skills are good, but they are not sufficiently systematic in developing their projects and do not make enough use of ICT. Pupils' research and development skills are adequate but they do not make enough use of work of other artists to influence their own work.

Teaching and learning

100. All teachers have good knowledge and expertise in the subject, so they can give good demonstrations of techniques that inform and inspire pupils, especially in terms of drawing. Teachers have very good skills in class management and create a very good climate for learning. As a result, pupils are keen to come to art and arrive ready to work, which they do without interruption. However, much of the lesson centres too much on the teacher so pupils are not learning to be independent as well as they might. Marking needs to be more consistent across groups, especially in pointing out what pupils have to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management

101. There is now energetic new leadership and management, which have had a dramatic effect on provision and standards; the subject has been lifted from one of the worst performing areas in the school to one where pupils now do well. The head of department has been successful in giving art a high profile within the school and forging teachers once more into an effective team. This has had an impact on standards and on the popularity of the subject; the number choosing art for GCSE has doubled this year. Documentation, including schemes of work, is of a high standard, although the amount of three-dimensional work carried out is limited. Pupils' work is displayed prominently around the school. This inspires and encourages pupils. It also greatly enhances the school environment.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards | Above average | Above average |
| Achievement | Very good | Very good |
| Teaching and learning | Very good | Very good |

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

Main strengths and areas for improvement

- Pupils achieve very well because of the very good teaching.
- Very good leadership has resulted in very good progress since the previous inspection.
- Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy the subject because of the enthusiastic, inspirational teaching and excellent relationships.
- Pupils do not learn enough from the visiting tutors in instrumental lessons because the teaching is boring and lessons are too short.

Examination results

102. Numbers entered for GCSE examinations in 2002 were very low so comparison is unreliable.

Standards and achievement

103. Pupils have above average performance skills; they use electronic keyboards very well to create imaginative well-structured pieces. Pupils have good access to computers with music software and use multi-tracking keyboards to enhance their work. Year 9 pupils achieve much better than expected standards of performance because of the very good specialist teaching they receive and the highly practical nature of lessons. By the end of Year 11, pupils' composition skills are well developed and they produce imaginative pieces in a variety of styles. Pupils are skilled at multi-tracking and incorporate a range of sampled sounds into their complex pieces. Theory work is less developed but still shows a good grasp of the knowledge required for the examination. Year 11 pupils are generally good performers on their chosen instrument.

Teaching and learning

104. Pupils learn very well because the teaching is very good and, on occasions, excellent. Lessons are planned well, and the pace of lessons is always brisk and lively. Pupils respond to the enthusiastic teaching by working very hard to a very high standard. They enjoy creating music because teachers ensure lessons have a terrific range of activities that capture the pupils' interest.

105. Teachers expect pupils to behave and achieve well; they drive the pace forward to keep the pupils motivated. Relationships with pupils are excellent and result in pupils not wanting to leave the room at the end of a lesson. Teachers carefully modify work so that all pupils can achieve well. On occasions the inspirational teaching results in pupils achieving far higher than expected standards. Resources are used very well and all pupils have access to good quality keyboards and computers, which help to raise standards of work. Year 11 pupils are very good independent learners. They have excellent attitudes and work hard in lessons without relying on the teacher to keep them focused. Marking and assessment procedures are very good. Targets are shared with pupils and they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils receiving instrumental lessons from the visiting tutors do not achieve well because teaching is mundane and unimaginative and lessons are too short.

Leadership and management

106. The head of department manages the department very well; she provides very good leadership with clear vision and direction. Assessment procedures are rigorous and very well planned but are used too severely so Year 9 pupils' standards have been underestimated. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are higher, the quality of teaching is much improved and the accommodation is now far better.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards | Above average | Above average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership | Excellent |
| Management | Very good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Very good |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outstanding leadership provides a clear vision focused on raising standards.
- Pupils achieve well and standards are rising as the result of good teaching.
- Innovative curriculum development offers opportunities for all pupils to gain accreditation in Year 11.
- Very good assessment procedures are in place, but teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are over-generous.

Examination results

107. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average, but they improved significantly in 2003. Boys perform consistently better than girls.

Standards and achievement

108. By the end of Year 9, pupils' practical skills are above average, and they show competence in a range of skills. Boys achieve well in football, demonstrating good ball control, tactical awareness and teamwork; girls make good progress in dance, showing good understanding of dynamics whilst creating their own group dance. By Year 11, pupils of all abilities achieve well in the GCSE courses, and show a good knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. Pupils made good progress in games because of the emphasis on problem-solving tasks related to tactical play. Independent learning skills develop well. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, and make good progress alongside their classmates.

Teaching and learning

109. In all years, pupils benefit from enthusiastic, knowledgeable and well-organised teachers who have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Very good relationships create a positive climate for learning with the result that pupils put very good physical effort into their work. High standards of participation, dress and behaviour are the norm. Pupils' attitudes are very good, reflected in their response to a demanding pace of learning, and the support they give to extra-curricular activities. Overall, the best learning occurs when pupils are actively involved in evaluating their own and others' work with a clear focus. Well-timed interventions by the teacher to encourage and challenge individuals to do better are also effective in moving the whole class forward in their learning. Marking is very good and data is used effectively to predict grades and set targets, although these are not always recorded in the pupils' course books and the results of assessments at the end of Year 9 are over-generous.

Leadership and management

110. Outstanding leadership, supported by a strong, committed team, has created a tangible sports college ethos. The department is moving forward with a clear direction focused on improvement and raising standards. Much of the work of the department is innovative; all pupils study for GCSE for example, and the range of opportunities open to pupils is exceptional. Monitoring of the subject's performance is a great strength, with even the smallest weakness being seized upon and put right. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection especially in terms of innovative curriculum development and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Standards continue to rise.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

For vocational courses, see previous sections headed 'Science' and 'Information and communication technology'.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Citizenship, personal, social and health education and careers are three well-integrated subjects. They have been developed to support one another. Other subjects also contribute well to citizenship, for example, physical education and history.

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

| | Year 9 | Year 11 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Not applicable |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The appointment of a senior member of staff to take charge of personal, social and health education and citizenship has given good leadership and direction.
- A thorough analysis of citizenship provision has enabled a good scheme of work to be developed.
- The enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including the year and school councils, are good examples of involving pupils in active citizenship.
- Assessment procedures need further extending to check the progress that pupils are making in developing the skills of citizenship.
- Citizenship within subjects needs to be made more explicit.

Examination results

111. At present there are no examination results. However, all Year 10 and 11 pupils now follow a GCSE examination course in citizenship and will receive their first results in 2004.

Standards and achievement

112. Pupils join the school with varying experience in personal and social education and citizenship. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a clear understanding of the debating process; some pupils have experienced the work of their year and school councils. In Year 9, pupils improve their skills of enquiry and communication to an average level by the end of the year. By the end of Year 11, pupils have an average understanding of law making, the role of the magistrate and a basic knowledge of government. Work experience is used successfully in citizenship to teach about health and safety. Pupils are well motivated; all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.

Teaching and learning

113. Good planning ensures that the work carried out by different classes is consistent. Aims of lessons are shared with pupils and, at the end of the lesson, teachers check to see that these have been met. Lessons usually have a good range of practical activities ensuring high attaining pupils and low attaining pupils are kept well involved. In the majority of lessons expectations of work and behaviour are high and, as a result, pupils' discussion and interaction are good. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to share opinions with others and develop their own ideas through group activities. Teachers make good use of outside speakers, such as the school's catering manager, to bring realism to citizenship lessons. At times, the visitor's contribution is too long to allow time in the lesson for the teacher to draw out the main issues. Marking and the assessment of pupils' progress are still at an early stage. In other subjects, citizenship is not sufficiently explicit, so pupils are not aware that they are studying such aspects and do not get the full benefit as a result.

Leadership and management

114. The assistant head with responsibility for the co-ordination of citizenship, personal and social education and careers gives good clear vision and direction. Already she has brought some consistency and structure through analysis of the citizenship programme, associated schemes of work and introduction of GCSE in citizenship to all pupils in Years 10 and 11. She has identified areas, like assessment, that need further development. However, these changes have not yet had time to fully impact on standards. Citizenship was not a curriculum subject at the time of the last report.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

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 |
| General studies | 11 | 45.5 | 78.6 | 0 | 25.7 | 11.8 | 30 |
| Mathematics | 5 | 40.0 | 74.2 | 20.0 | 34.3 | 18.0 | 31.3 |

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Mathematics | 20 | 100.0 | 93.3 | 55.0 | 52.2 | 85.0 | 84.7 |
| Design and technology | 7 | 100.0 | 95.3 | 28.6 | 35.5 | 68.6 | 76.5 |
| Biology | 16 | 93.8 | 91.6 | 25.0 | 26.3 | 62.5 | 74.1 |
| Art and design | 8 | 100.0 | 96.1 | 62.5 | 48.7 | 100.0 | 85.1 |
| Communication studies | 12 | 100.0 | 98.3 | 41.7 | 36.8 | 85.0 | 81.1 |
| Business studies | 7 | 100.0 | 96.4 | 28.6 | 32.8 | 68.6 | 76.5 |
| Sociology | 12 | 100.0 | 95.4 | 16.7 | 39.6 | 65.0 | 79.1 |
| Other sciences | 13 | 100.0 | 94.7 | 23.1 | 40.1 | 70.8 | 78.7 |
| English literature | 14 | 100.0 | 98.5 | 28.6 | 43.7 | 82.9 | 84.3 |
| Chemistry | 13 | 100.0 | 94.0 | 30.8 | 45.9 | 75.4 | 81.1 |
| General studies | 34 | 88.2 | 90.1 | 8.8 | 29.1 | 52.9 | 69.3 |
| Geography | 5 | 100.0 | 97.1 | 60.0 | 40.5 | 80.0 | 80.9 |
| Physics | 5 | 100.0 | 92.8 | 60.0 | 42.8 | 96.0 | 78.6 |
| Sports studies | 17 | 100.0 | 95.4 | 35.3 | 29.5 | 77.6 | 73.2 |
| Business (AVCE) | 24 | 66.7 | 87.1 | 0 | 16.5 | 37.5 | 60.1 |
| Science (AVCE) | 22 | 45.5 | 90.1 | 0 | 9.3 | 22.7 | 58.4 |

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature and French were inspected in detail, but one German lesson was also observed, where the teaching was good.

English

Provision in English literature is **good**.

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards | Above average | Above average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Satisfactory |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Gifted students produce work of very high quality.
- Some of the teaching allows many middle and lower attaining students to be passive.
- Students do not develop independent learning skills as much as might be expected.

Examination results

115. In 2002, results at A-level were average. Results in 2003 were better than those obtained in 2002. Results over the last three years have shown a steady improvement.

Standards and achievement

116. In Years 12 and 13 there is some variation regarding students' willingness to participate in group or whole-class discussion in order to increase their own understanding and to improve their communication skills. At best, the most gifted individuals make an excellent contribution to discussions. However, middle and lower attaining students speak briefly, tend to express themselves in too colloquial a way and find difficulty in elaborating their ideas when asked to do so. These features are mirrored in students' written work. Higher attainers produce very well expressed, rigorous and thoroughly evaluative essays. The written work of lower attainers tends to be brief and the language lacks sophistication. The extent to which students develop their own reading interests is generally below expectations for the course. At best, students have their favourite authors but a significant number of others cite articles from magazines and newspapers as their own preferred reading. Higher attaining pupils conduct their own research and possess an intellectual curiosity but many middle and lower attaining students depend heavily upon teachers to produce additional reading and to generate ideas.

Teaching and learning

117. Teachers possess a good knowledge of the subject and of the requirements of the course. They ensure that students understand what is required of them and this creates a good sense of purpose in lessons. Lessons are also effective when the pace is brisk, variety is introduced and the teacher's questioning seeks to involve students in the lesson. However, many of the lower attainers have little to say and are willing to be passive. Additionally, the range of attainment amongst students is wide, particularly in Year 12, and not all students are suitably challenged in the light of their earlier attainment and experience in the subject. Teachers set fewer tasks to require students to find things out for themselves than might be expected. The marking is mostly thorough and helpful.

Leadership and management

118. The teachers work closely together and offer students a well co-ordinated programme. The head of department makes good use of data to monitor progress. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Standards | Below average | Average |
| Achievement | Unsatisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Unsatisfactory | Unsatisfactory |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership | Unsatisfactory |
| Management | Unsatisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Unsatisfactory |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been too little improvement in results over the past three years.
- Teachers do not allow students to progress quickly enough.
- Students' attitudes to work are good; they work hard out of lessons.

Examination results

119. Very few students were entered for the A-level examination in 2002 and 2003 so comparisons with national data are not valid; however, there has been no improvement in results over the past three years. Students have mostly attained low examination grades compared to their grades at GCSE.

Standards and achievement

120. Students are underachieving because they have a great deal of work to do to catch up with the deficiencies in their knowledge from the GCSE, and because some of the teaching does not allow them to progress quickly enough. They make better progress in speaking as they have access to a native speaker and so can use their spoken language regularly, and because several of them have organised their own trips to France. Although they cover topics that are appropriate for A-level work such as immigration and racism, the writing of all but the very able is often inaccurate and arguments are not always developed well enough.

Teaching and learning

121. Teachers spend much of the Year 12 course filling in basic gaps in students' understanding of grammar which means students continue working at GCSE level for too long. Teachers also have low expectations of how much students can understand, so conduct lessons mostly in English. Students complete homework diligently but, even with this preparation, too often the lesson is dominated by the teacher talking instead of allowing the students opportunities to do the work themselves. An exception to this is when ICT is used and students are given time to try out what they have learned for themselves.

Leadership and management

122. The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory because the results have remained low since the previous inspection and the course or teaching has not been adapted to remedy the problems.

MATHEMATICS

The school offers mathematics and further mathematics. The work of students studying further mathematics was sampled and it is clear that they do very well indeed at the school.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards | Above average | Above average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Satisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Satisfactory |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good level of knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts.
- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Schemes of work are not developed sufficiently to give teachers guidelines on teaching methods and resources so that the quality of teaching can be improved further.

Examination results

123. In 2002, the results at A-level were broadly average. There was a significant improvement in 2003.

Standards and achievement

124. The quality of students' written and oral work is better than that usually seen at this stage in the course. Students have a good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of past work when introduced to a new topic. In Year 12, they quickly learn to identify different types of functions, using their understanding of combined functions.

Teaching and learning

125. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics. They give good support with clear explanations when students ask for clarification and this allows students to improve their understanding. In the better lessons, students are encouraged to participate in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering suggestions in articulate ways. However, in a minority of lessons, there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons. The better lessons proceed at a brisk pace and are planned well to allow students to consolidate each stage of new learning before progressing to the next stage. Homework is set regularly; it is used effectively to consolidate and extend new work that is introduced in the lesson. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to develop their study skills by encouraging them to read about topics in preparation for lessons. The marking of students' work contains good diagnostic comments that show the students where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

126. Although there is a comprehensive programme of study that follows the published syllabuses, the schemes of work lack guidance on appropriate teaching methods and use of resources that would enhance the teaching further. Teachers work well together. However, the checking of the quality of teaching is not rigorous enough to enable good practice to be shared and teachers' skills enhanced. There are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they

progress through the sixth form. Entering students for national mathematics competitions enhances their mathematics. Teachers support students well by providing tuition at lunchtimes and after school.

SCIENCE

Biology and vocational science were inspected in detail, but lessons in chemistry and physics were also observed; both were satisfactory.

Biology

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

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership | Satisfactory |
| Management | Satisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Satisfactory |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good working relationships between teachers and students lead to a positive learning environment.
- Students are not really made to excel and tend to be passive in class.
- There is not enough sharing of good practice by the teachers in the department

Examination results

127. For the previous three years, results have been below the national average at A-level but the results in 2003 were much better. However, the attainment of students commencing the course has been below average and achievement has been satisfactory.

Standards and achievement

128. Although standards are average overall, there are areas where students do well and areas where they could do better. Students are good at carrying out research, using a variety of sources, and then presenting their findings using ICT. Students work well together, and with their teachers. However, they do not express themselves clearly enough when taking part in discussions. Students' practical work is not up to the same standard as their understanding and, above all, they are not aware of their full potential, so do not strive for the highest levels.

Teaching and learning

129. Lessons are well prepared. The good relationships between students and teachers ensure a positive and pleasant working environment. Students' work is marked carefully with helpful comments but there is not a standard system shared by the different teachers. Students are not challenged enough to really excel in some of the topics and there is an emphasis on following the basic requirements of the syllabus.

Leadership and management

130. The introduction of a new syllabus and increased co-operation between teachers have had a positive effect on results in 2003. The sharing of good practice is insufficient at present but plans are in place for increased observation of lessons.

Vocational science

Provision in vocational science is **good**.

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------|
| Standards | Below average | Average |
| Achievement | Satisfactory | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Satisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Not applicable |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Year 13 is well informed and enthusiastic; students enjoy the subject and now do better than might be expected in the AVCE course.
- Students' portfolios are above the average standard. They are carefully presented, wide-ranging and detailed.
- Teachers could demand more from students in Year 12, and ensure their lessons do not finish early.

Examination results

131. In 2002, the AVCE science results were well below the national average. These candidates were part of the first group of students nationally to be entered for this new qualification. The department is aware that the results were not as good as they should have been. In 2003, results improved dramatically and the 20 students gained results that matched the 2002 national average.

132. Small numbers of students follow the GNVQ intermediate science course in Year 12. In 2002, eight students were entered; one student gained a merit and five gained pass grades. The results in 2003 were not as good and only two of the five candidates gained pass grades.

Standards and achievement

133. Students enter the AVCE course with skills in literacy and numeracy that are below average for this particular course. Some also have relatively low grades in GCSE science. In Year 12, students are achieving standards that are below average and are therefore doing as well as might be expected at this stage in the course. They demonstrate average skills in using ICT to identify and present information about local science-based organisations. However, their practical and investigative skills are below average.

134. In Year 13, where students are following the second year of the AVCE course, standards are average for the course and students are therefore doing better than expected. Students do particularly well in their portfolio work. Their accounts of, for example, the preparation of samples of organic compounds, are detailed and well presented. Several students find it difficult to respond to unfamiliar questions and do not always express their understanding as clearly as they might. Hence they do not do as well in externally tested units as they do in their portfolios. They do not, at present, have any additional teaching in key skills which would be helpful in developing their skills in answering questions.

135. The Year 12 intermediate GNVQ course has only just started. The school has responded to the request of students who now wish to follow this course, even though they did not express such a preference earlier in the planning stage. Five students were only in their third lesson when observed and one had only just joined the group. Nevertheless, standards reached by the group were average for this stage in the course. Students can explain the major features of the two main organisations involved in providing information on health and safety and they have produced clear and concise fact sheets to record and reinforce what they have learnt.

Teaching and learning

136. Teaching and learning are better in Year 13 than in Year 12. In Year 13, teachers have built up good relationships with students, and students are well motivated and work hard. In Year 12 there are a few students who lack commitment to the course and seem reluctant to make a real effort; it is then more difficult for teachers to move the group on as quickly as they do in Year 13. There is not yet sufficiently firm advice to prevent a few students taking up the course to fill in timetable gaps, without sufficient interest in science, who later leave the course or do not achieve a pass grade.

137. In both year groups, teachers are well informed about the course details and the various topics. They give instructions and explanations clearly and provide appropriate and interesting activities. Students in Year 13 enjoy the subject, appreciate the variety provided by having several teachers, each with his or her own individual style, and value the additional support that is always available if needed. In the satisfactory lessons in Year 12, there are a few weaknesses. In particular, teachers could require more from students in terms of asking more challenging questions and getting students to think more for themselves. These lessons have a tendency to finish early and so do not make the best use of all the available time.

Leadership and management

138. Standards in AVCE have improved quickly after an unsatisfactory start with the new course. The courses are now well planned and well organised. However, teachers do not set targets for students so students are not given a clear indication of what grades they might be expected to achieve. This absence of targets also prevents any comparison of anticipated and actual grades and any analysis of how well different groups of students have achieved in these courses. The school did not offer any vocational science courses at the time of the previous inspection so it is not possible to judge progress in these subjects since that time.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good**.

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Good |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Good leadership has resulted in good progress being made since the previous inspection.
- The curriculum allows students to pick and choose from a wide range of ICT courses.
- Students do not always have suitable qualifications when embarking on courses.

Examination results

139. In 2003, all three students who took GNVQ Intermediate ICT gained at least a pass. Results at A-level were relatively low in 2003, because three students did not gain a grade; these students did not have high enough grades at GCSE when embarking on the course.

Standards and achievement

140. By the end of Year 12, students have a sound grasp of different programming languages; they know and understand the difference between compilers and interpreters. Higher attainers understand how object-orientated languages operate whilst middle and lower attainers struggle with this concept. Most students have a satisfactory grasp of how generic software can be used to support their studies.

141. By the end of Year 13, students' practical skills are above average and they use software applications with ease. Higher attainers understand how organisations function and categorise job roles into strategic, tactical and operational. Lower attainers use the Internet to research topics but are not always discerning enough when editing information. Their search routines are not always accurate enough.

Teaching and learning

142. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject; they use this well when providing examples of how ICT is used in industry and commerce. Relationships are very good and there were many occasions when students from other classes worked in the room, unaided by the teacher, in a mature and sensible manner. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboard facilities available to them. For example, in a Year 13 class, the teacher produced a slide show that demonstrated how research routines should be carried out; from this students realised the importance of accuracy in framing their searches. There are occasions, however, when the pace is not quick enough and students are off task. Assessment procedures are good; teachers mark work regularly and accurately.

Leadership and management

143. The lack of ICT across the curriculum and the low standards attained was a key issue noted in the previous report. Good leadership has enabled the department to make good progress; a wide range of ICT courses is now on offer. Standards are much improved as a result of the good teaching.

HUMANITIES

Geography, sociology and religious education were inspected in detail, but one very good lesson in psychology was observed.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Satisfactory | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Good |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising as a result of good teaching in Year 13.
- Students receive good individual support.
- Students' discussion skills are underdeveloped because teachers do not place enough emphasis on discussions in lessons.

Examination results

144. Results in the 2002 A-level examinations were average but improved in 2003 with just over half the candidates achieving the higher A or B grade. The results show an improving trend over recent years.

Standards and achievement

145. At the end of Year 13 most students have a sound understanding of topics, such as the development of countries and population issues. In studies about world population growth, for example, students are able to contrast the ideas of Malthus and Boserup; they know about the strengths and weaknesses of the theories but do not develop their answers enough in discussion to improve their understanding. Students know terms such as 'ecosystems' and can apply their understanding to real situations. In Year 12 they have a basic understanding of issues arising from regional flooding but are reliant on support to take ideas further.

Teaching and learning

146. Teachers are well qualified and this has a good impact on the progress that students make by the end of Year 13. Students benefit from the support and guidance they receive, particularly the detailed advice and comment given in assignments. As a result they improve their understanding of topics and assignment writing skills. Teachers routinely expect students to think deeply about topics. In discussions, however, particularly in Year 12, students are not consistently pressed to develop answers fully and are not made to prepare themselves adequately prior to attending the lesson.

Leadership and management

147. Teachers are appropriately deployed to teach the different components of study and support is given to less experienced teachers, so their integration into the team is rapid and effective. The development plan appropriately focuses attention on improving the achievement of lower attaining students who enter the course in Year 12 without having studied the subject at GCSE or have a lower attainment on entry to the course than is usual.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **satisfactory**.

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership | Satisfactory |
| Management | Unsatisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Not applicable |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching brings about effective learning for students of all abilities.
- The teacher has a secure command of the subject.
- There is insufficient monitoring of performance data.
- Patterns of performance are not regularly reviewed and appropriate action is not always taken to prevent some students from underachieving.

Examination results

148. Results in 2002 were well below average; overall, students did as well as expected given their standards on starting the course. However, those students who gained a grade did well but some students were ungraded because their falling standards were not picked up soon enough. There was a similar picture in 2003.

Standards and achievement

149. In Year 12, students new to this course are making good progress in beginning to understand key sociological terms and concepts. In Year 13, students understand concepts and theories from different sociological traditions. They use a range of evidence well to produce and support generalisations about social life, but do not adopt a critical attitude towards sources of evidence.

Teaching and learning

150. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, and use this to set clear objectives for each lesson. Lessons are planned well with a variety of activities available to match the differing needs of the large number of students in the class. When discussion takes place, it is led skilfully in order to ensure that all students' contributions are encouraged and valued. Learning is assessed well during lessons, but the rigorous monitoring of students' progress through frequent assessment and student target setting is unsatisfactory. Students' attitudes towards the subject are positive and they enjoy their lessons.

Leadership and management

151. Leadership of the department is satisfactory. The head of the department is not complacent and does aim to improve standards. However, management of the subject is unsatisfactory. There is a lack of a systematic approach to the monitoring of performance data and an element of disorganisation on day-to-day management of the subject; good intentions are not always followed through. Whilst teaching is good, overall achievement is only satisfactory, as the students' performance is not reviewed regularly enough to note when standards are slipping. When standards do slide appropriate action is not always taken. Sociology was not a focus subject in the last inspection.

Religious education

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

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards | Below average | Below average |
| Achievement | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership | Satisfactory |
| Management | Satisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Good |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are ready to discuss and challenge statements when they have the opportunity.
- There is insufficient opportunity for students to take responsibility and become independent learners.
- The lack of independent work prevents the assessment and monitoring of the progress of individual students.

Examination results

152. Students entered for the AS examination for the first time in 2003. A wide range of grades was gained, and students did as well as expected.

Standards and achievement

153. Students are well motivated and prepared to attend lessons outside the normal school day. They research information in support of lessons and they are developing a sound understanding of ethical and moral issues, and the religious response to them. When they have the opportunity, high attaining students are willing to challenge statements, supporting their argument with reason. Their work shows a concern for detail and logical order. There is, however, insufficient opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding or to use the information they receive in responding in writing. As a result, their ability to explain, discuss and present a reasoned written argument is below average.

Teaching and learning

154. Resources are used well; clear information sheets designed to be appropriate for the needs and level of the students supplement textbooks. As a result, all students can learn at a pace that is appropriate to their own requirements. Students recognise the commitment of their teacher and her passion for the subject is communicated to them. Too often, however, the lesson is dominated by the teacher talking to the students, when other activities, such as discussion and group presentation, would make the lesson more interesting and improve their skills at the same time. As a result students are becoming dependent upon the teacher and are not becoming independent learners. Homework is used to enable students to develop the information from the lesson, but there are too few opportunities for them to demonstrate their understanding by applying their knowledge in response to written questions. As a result there is insufficient independent work for the teacher to assess students' progress accurately, or to enable students to identify their progress or know how to improve.

Leadership and management

155. The AS-level course was successfully introduced last year and most students have chosen to continue this year to full A-level. Numbers of students starting the course this year have risen. Resources are being developed and good use was made of the inter-school conference last year. Assessment is not yet developed and there is insufficient monitoring of progress.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design was inspected, but lessons in drama and media studies were observed. The drama lesson was satisfactory and the media studies lesson was good.

Art and design

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

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Standards | Average | Average |
| Achievement | Very good | Very good |
| Teaching and learning | Very good | Very good |

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is imaginative teaching leading to rapidly improving standards.
- Teachers inspire students by the quality of their demonstrations.
- There is very good individual guidance and support for all students.
- More use could be made of ICT in lessons.

Examination results

156. Results were well above average in 2002, but slightly lower in 2003.

Standards and achievement

157. Standards are currently average, but students are progressing very quickly and, taking account of previous examination results, their achievement is very good. Students are good at drawing on a large scale with charcoal, where they can demonstrate their wide range of shading techniques. They could still do better at drawing on the work of other artists for their inspiration, but they paint and draw well from direct observation.

Teaching and learning

158. Teachers impart very good specialist knowledge and expertise to their students. They give inspiring demonstrations of the skills of drawing and painting. Above all, teachers show students how to research and explore ideas in imaginative and creative ways; the results are to be clearly seen in the improved standards as students move through the course. The way that lessons are planned allows teachers to provide a really good quality of support on an individual basis, so that achievement in lessons is never less than good for any student. Nevertheless, teachers could still make more use of ICT as a part of their day-to-day-teaching.

Leadership and management

159. The dynamic new leadership and management have had a significant impact on the number of students choosing art. The number has increased fourfold this year. Art is made exciting and interesting by the quality of the ideas presented for study and by the quality of teaching. Vast displays of students' work around the school are also inspiring and informative. Students are made aware of the impact of art on the senses and emotions; this contributes to their spiritual and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards | Above average | Above average |
| Achievement | Very good | Very good |
| Teaching and learning | Very good | Very good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership | Excellent |
| Management | Very good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Very good |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching results in students achieving much better standards than would be expected given their standards on starting the course.
- Leadership is excellent; the department is being driven forwards, and results are improving rapidly.
- Written resources given to students do not always match their individual needs.

Examination results

160. The 2002 examination results at A-level were average. Girls performed better than boys and achieved well. Results improved significantly in 2003.

Standards and achievement

161. Students work hard and achieve very well, showing a good knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects, which they apply very effectively to their own practical experience. Students are confident in their use of the specialist language of the subject.

Teaching and learning

162. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and the examination syllabus, and their expectations of what students can achieve are high in every respect. Excellent planning is a feature of all lessons; objectives are clear and shared with students. A range of teaching strategies is used effectively to involve students, actively, in thinking, decision-making and discussing their work. Very good questioning leads to stimulating discussions, for example on the morals of cloning athletes. Students are highly motivated. Very good learning occurs through lively, demanding lessons, which extend students' depth and breadth of learning through reflection, formulating new ideas and presenting convincing arguments to support their views. The analysis and use of assessment data to set individual targets and to estimate progress are first class. This is particularly important, as students enter the course with lower attainment than is often the case. Marking is good, but does not indicate how students are performing against their target grades. Resources given to students do not always match their individual needs; some are too difficult for students to understand.

Leadership and management

163. Very strong leadership ensures that monitoring of the subject's performance is central to management and that the whole team of teachers pull together to raise standards. Standards have risen considerably.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards | Above average | Above average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Good |
| Progress since last inspection | Good |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.
- Students have access to very good learning resources.
- Links with local businesses are satisfactory, but could be improved.
- Teaching of literacy is satisfactory, but could be improved.

Examination results

164. Examination results at AS and A-level were below average in 2002 and students' achievement was satisfactory. Results improved significantly in 2003. Examination results in 2002 in AVCE examinations were average and in Intermediate GNVQ were above average. Students' achievement in both examinations was good. Results improved in 2003.

Standards and achievement

165. Standards on all courses are above average and students are achieving well because of the good teaching they receive. Students thrive in the good learning environment that is the product of very good accommodation and resources, used well by dedicated teachers.

Teaching and learning

166. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and ensure that students are very aware of the requirements for success in the courses they follow. Lessons are carefully planned to make good use of the time, and students find them interesting because lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers set activities that challenge students' thinking. In one A-level class, for example, small groups presented their conclusions verbally to the other students, following their research into various decisions, about trade in the Third World, made by the World Trade Organisation. The standard of presentation was good, as was students' knowledge when subjected to close follow-up questioning by fellow students and the teacher. Similarly, students in an Intermediate GNVQ class showed good powers of analysis when pairs of students evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of a case study business plan. Students display their good attitudes to study in their well-presented and extensive coursework assignments and teachers reward their efforts with detailed and informative marking that indicates strengths and weaknesses. Teachers provide clear guidance on how to improve so students are well aware of the standard of their own learning. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory but there is room for increased use of specific strategies for improving students' writing skills. The subject has satisfactory links with local businesses that could be improved to enhance even further students' practical awareness of the business world.

Leadership and management

167. Teachers share a commitment to high standards that owes much to the clear vision for continuous improvement that pervades all the work of the subject area. Good leadership provides a positive climate that gives teachers the confidence to evaluate critically their individual and collective performances. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection in maintaining the good achievement of students.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

| | Year 12 | Year 13 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards | Above average | Above average |
| Achievement | Good | Good |
| Teaching and learning | Good | Good |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership | Good |
| Management | Good |
| Progress since previous inspection | Not applicable |

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards on all courses have steadily improved over recent years.
- Teachers have a good command of their subject.
- The timetable does not allow for AVCE students to visit work placements unless they miss their other lessons.

Examination results

168. Results in Foundation, Intermediate and AVCE courses up to 2003 have followed an improving trend. Students are exceeding their target grades and results are above the national averages.

Standards and achievement

169. Standards on all courses are above average and achievement is good. Year 12 students, who are new to the course, are demonstrating a competent understanding of health and social care services. They understand how to plan for health and well-being and they can identify positive aspects of their own behaviour and see how this can impact on a care setting. Students in Year 13 demonstrate an above average appreciation of the ethical issues that arise when balancing the rights of clients with the rights of others. Students have a good understanding of how policies and equal opportunities legislation are used to promote the client's rights.

Teaching and learning

170. Teachers' enthusiasm inspires students who consequently work hard, and respond to the challenges that staff set for them. Staff have a secure understanding of course requirements and they use a range of teaching methods which best allow the students to develop different ways of working. They plan their lessons well and they have a good command of their subject. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly and constructively. Students are encouraged to comment on and assess their own work; they have an understanding of the criteria that teachers use to assess their work. Tutors help students with the coursework requirements as the course progresses in order to meet the needs of individual students. However, the timetable causes problems for students in that they are not able to visit their work placements without missing some taught lessons.

Leadership and management

171. The department benefits from a head of department who has a sense of purpose and high aspirations for the subject. She is committed to inclusion and has an appropriate concern for the needs of individual students. She has correctly identified departmental deficiencies and is aware of the need to ensure that there is a consistency of good practice across the department. The management of the department is equally good. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and there is uniformity of systems and good practice within the department. Health and social care was not a focus subject in the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

