

Lordswood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre

Lordswood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre was inspected on 10-14 November 2003. Ofsted subsequently received a complaint from the school and, after undertaking an investigation, the original report was amended. The main changes relate to the overall effectiveness of the school, the standards achieved by pupils and leadership and management.

The amended report was posted on the web-site on 18 December 2006.

INSPECTION REPORT

**LORDSWOOD GIRLS' SCHOOL AND THE SIXTH
FORM CENTRE**

Harborne, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103485

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Hattatt

Lead inspector: David Bate

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th November 2003

Inspection number: 261636

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll;	878
School address:	Knightlow Road Harborne Birmingham
Postcode:	B17 8QB
Telephone number:	0121 4292838
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Mark Hopton
Date of previous inspection:	19/10/98

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lordswood Girls' School and The Sixth Form Centre, Harborne is an 11 to 19 secondary school operating within a highly selective grammar school area in Birmingham. Pupils and students are drawn from Sandwell and Birmingham, an area that includes a very diverse ethnic and socio-economic profile. As well as pupils from professional, owner-occupier backgrounds the school serves some of the most disadvantaged areas of Sandwell and Birmingham. A higher than average proportion of the pupils have English as an additional language. The largest ethnic groups include Indian, white British, Pakistani and those from African Caribbean backgrounds. The remaining pupils come from a wide range of other ethnic groups. The number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is about average and those with statements of special educational needs is below average. The main areas of pupils' needs are moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Attainment on entry is below average overall although there is a very wide range of abilities.

The school has received achievement awards for three consecutive years and was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2003. It gained DfES recognition in 2003 for its work with children of all abilities and backgrounds.

The sixth form has increased in size significantly in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9189	John Horwood	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
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18888	Jan Boulton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education
4426	Terry Fitchett	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages
20832	Mohindar Galowalia	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science Chemistry
17799	Anthony Stoddart	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science
18261	Anthony Hill	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art
30597	Robina Howells	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics
15576	David Nebesnuick	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography History
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2200	Jim Stirrup	<i>Team inspector</i>	Media studies
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Lordswood Girls' School is a very good school with some outstanding features. This school has high aspirations and the capacity to improve further. It provides its pupils with a high quality education. It has made good improvements since its last inspection and provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations of the headteacher, well supported by good quality of leadership and management at both senior and middle management levels.
- The very high standards of attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE.
- The high levels of achievement by pupils across all years in many subjects.
- The high quality of teaching and learning in almost all subjects and the pupils' very good attitudes to learning.
- The excellent review tutor system for monitoring pupils' personal and academic achievements and progress.
- Provision for pupils' care, welfare, support and guidance is very good.
- The school provides very well for pupils of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds.
- A significantly strong feature of the school is the racial harmony that exists.

- Governance is unsatisfactory because:
 - iii. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
 - iv. The provision for design and technology in Years 7 to 9 does not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.
 - v. The school does not provide information and communication technology (ICT) for all pupils in Year 10 or across the curriculum.
 - vi. The governors' annual report to parents does not include all statutory requirements.
 - vii. The school does not provide sufficient religious education in the sixth form.
- A few weak areas in teachers' specialist subject knowledge in design and technology and ICT are having a detrimental effect on pupils' progress and achievement.
- The quality and availability of accommodation does not support teaching and learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

In 2003, compared to all schools, standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 in English were excellent. In mathematics and science they were good. Attainment in these subjects compared with similar schools is excellent. The number of pupils attaining 5+ A*-C grades in GCSE at the end of Year 11 in 2003 is well above the national average. This is excellent when compared with similar schools. Achievement compared with pupils' attainment on entry is excellent by the end of Years 9 and 11. The standard of work seen in lessons and pupils' books bears this out. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well compared with their prior attainment.

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	B	A	A*
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	C	C	N/A	

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

Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Overall, development of pupils' understanding of moral, social and cultural issues is good. The development of pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good with excellent procedures in place to monitor and follow up absence.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The teaching seen during the inspection was good with some that was outstanding; this is why pupils achieve so well at the school. But a few weak areas in specialist subject knowledge in design and technology and ICT mean that pupils' progress is not quite as good in these subjects. Assessment processes to support pupils' further progress are good. The quality of curriculum provision is generally good but there are instances where it is unsatisfactory. The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is also very good and as a result, these pupils achieve their full potential. Pupils are very well supported and looked after, so they learn in a caring and safe environment. The review tutor system, which is central to pupils' support, is excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The overall leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. Other key staff provide good quality leadership and management at various levels. The innovative move towards a collegiate approach to management is working well. Much of the supportive governing body's work is good, but governance overall is unsatisfactory because it does not meet the statutory requirement in several areas.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall, parents are pleased with the school. They are particularly pleased with the high expectations that teachers have of the children, the progress they make and the quality of teaching. There were concerns about the lack of consultation with them, the behaviour of pupils, the approachability of the school, and the amount and frequency of homework. Pupils were generally supportive of the school but a significant proportion of them feel that the school does not listen to their views, that they are not treated fairly, and that the school is not well run.

In all areas raised by parents and pupils, the inspection team found they were at least satisfactory.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things this school must do to improve even further are to:

- Ensure the provision for design and technology in Years 7 to 9 meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Meet requirements for providing ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and across the curriculum.
- Ensure teachers in design and technology and ICT have the specialist knowledge and expertise to teach the full curriculum at the appropriate levels.
- Improve the quality and availability of accommodation in order to support teaching and learning and ensure further improvements in provision and standards.
- Provide sufficient religious education in the sixth form.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
- Ensure the governors' annual report to parents includes all statutory requirements.

THE SIXTH FORM CENTRE

The sixth form is larger than usual, with a very significant increase in student numbers this year, with girls and boys taking a variety of A/AS and AVCE/GNVQ programmes. Its ethnic mix is a positive feature and attainment on entry is comprehensive.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good sixth form that is cost effective. The significant increase in numbers this year demonstrates increased confidence in the sixth form and the extended range of courses now available. Some of these courses are offered as part of an increased partnership with other local colleges which has also resulted in an increase in the number of pupils transferring to the sixth form centre. Results over the past few years have been very variable and comparison with other schools' results is not meaningful because student numbers were so low. The school produces target grades for students based on their GCSE results; in 2003 the results show that on average students' achievement was broadly in line with target points scores at AS Level and slightly above at A Level.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The increased range of courses available within the school and through partnerships with other colleges.
- Excellent support and guidance provided through the review tutor system.
- The very good vision and high aspirations of the sixth form leadership team.
- The school does not provide a daily collective act of worship nor does it sufficiently meet statutory requirements for religious education.
- The accommodation and resources for both study and social use are inadequate for the increased number of students.

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 very good . Results in A Level in 2002 were above average. Recruitment increased significantly in 2003. Provision in Spanish is very good . Teaching is consistently of a very high quality and standards of students' work are above average.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is very good . Teaching and learning are very good and students are achieving well.
Science	Provision in chemistry is good . Teaching and learning are good in a subject where students achieve well.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is satisfactory . Teaching is satisfactory. Students make good progress in lessons and achieve well over the two years. Leadership and management are very good and standards are improving.
Health and Social Care	Provision in health and social care is good . Leadership and management of the subject are good and lead to students achieving well on GNVQ and A Level courses.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in media studies is very good . Students make very good progress in the subject. Teaching is at least good and often very good.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Other subjects	Other subjects were sampled including psychology, sociology, business studies, art, geography, design and technology, physics, history, biology and physical education . Teaching and learning in all these lessons were at least satisfactory.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The care and support for students is very good and the needs of all students are well known. The tutor review system, which ensures that all students have individual discussions with their tutors at regular periods, provides excellent support, advice and guidance backed up by very good records. Students receive good advice from the school and external agencies about opportunities for further education and careers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management in the sixth form are good. The leadership team is enthusiastic and has been very successful in increasing the number of students entering the sixth form from both the main school and from other local schools. This has been achieved by direct recruitment as well as by increasing and modifying courses offered to students. The available accommodation space is well managed but there is inadequate space for students to carry out private study and for social facilities.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are generally supportive of the sixth form and the opportunities it is able to offer. They enjoy being in the sixth form, which they think is well run. They find the teachers accessible and helpful and think that they are treated fairly and with respect. Some students have concerns over the advice they receive about careers and some think there are too few enrichment activities and too few ways for them to express their views about issues within the school. Many students consider that the accommodation is inadequate and that this restricts social facilities and access to study facilities including computers for research.

The inspection team agrees with the views of the students in relation to the positive and negative issues raised.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are very good. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE in 2003 in English are exceptionally high. Standards in mathematics and science are above the national average at the end of Year 9, and slightly above in mathematics and in line in science in GCSE. The number of pupils attaining 5+ A* - C grades at GCSE in 2003 was well above the national average.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- GCSE results in 2003 for pupils attaining 5+ A* - C grades which were well above the national average.
- Excellent achievement by most pupils by Year 11 in most subjects compared with schools in similar circumstances.
- Exceptional results in English at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE in 2003
- Excellent achievement by pupils in English compared to their attainment on entry to the school.
- Below average attainment in design and technology in Years 7 to 9 and in physical education in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	39.0 (36.2)	33.3 (33.3)
mathematics	36.6 (34.8)	35.3 (34.7)
science	35.5 (33.6)	33.7 (33.3)

There were 135 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Results for pupils attaining Level 5+ in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average for all schools in English and above average in mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 6+ was well above the national average in English and science and above average in mathematics. The school's results were outstanding compared with those of schools in similar circumstances. Results as judged by average points score were also outstanding compared with these schools. Pupils' attainment compared with their attainment on entry is in the top five per cent nationally and clearly indicates the school is adding excellent value to pupils' achievement in these key areas.
2. Overall, by the age of 14, students' literacy and mathematical skills are above average.
3. The statutory teacher assessments in 2003 indicated students were attaining well above the nationally expected standards by the age of 14 years in all other subjects except history and music, which were close to expectations. The standards of work seen in lessons and pupils' books indicate that some of these assessments are somewhat generous.
4. Standards of pupils' work seen in Years 7 to 9 in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history are above average. Standards seen in all other subjects, except design and technology, which is below average, are in line with national expectations. This represents very good achievement and progress by pupils in English, mathematics, modern languages and history, and good achievement and progress in all other subjects except design and technology, where achievement is below average.

5. Overall younger pupils achieve exceptionally well given their starting points. This is evident through their: high examination results; the work seen in books; and the good advances in learning noted across almost all subjects.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A* - C grades	73 (60.4)	52.6(49.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (98.6)	88.6 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	94.6 (94)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	41.6 (38.1)	34.7 (30.4)

There were 135 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. GCSE results in 2003 for pupils attaining 5+ A* - C grades were well above the national average. All pupils gained 5+ A* - G grades, again well above average. These results were outstanding when compared with schools in similar circumstances. Attainment in relation to these pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9 was in the top five per cent nationally and clearly indicates pupils' achievement is excellent throughout Years 10 and 11 in many subjects. The 2003 results show clear improvement since the last inspection.

7. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection are above those expected nationally in English, mathematics, modern languages, history and geography. Standards seen in all other subjects, except physical education which is below average, are in line with national expectations.

8. Older pupils also do exceptionally well at the school so that they reach their full potential. This was noted in the majority of lessons seen across all subject areas.

9. Standards of literacy and mathematical skills are strong in Years 10 and 11.

10. Pupils with SEN in all year groups achieve very well. Pupils who have been identified as being gifted and talented achieve at appropriately high levels.

11. There is little difference in all year groups in the overall achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

Sixth form

12. Subject results over the past few years have been variable and comparison with other schools' results is not meaningful because student numbers were low. The students who took examinations in 2002 achieved an average point score which was broadly in line with the national average. The school produces target grades for students based on their GCSE results. In 2003 the results show that on average students' achievement was broadly in line with target points scores at AS Level and slightly above at A Level. Work seen in lessons and students' books indicates most students are achieving above average standards in most subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

13. Attendance levels and punctuality throughout the school day are very good. Behaviour is good throughout the school. Pupils' attitudes and relationships with each other and with adults are very good in both the main school and the sixth form. The number of fixed term exclusions is low and there was only one permanent exclusion last year. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good and provision for their social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good attendance and punctuality is supported by excellent administrative procedures.
- Pupils' very good attitudes and relationships result in a very good learning environment.
- The very good promotion of racial harmony, and very good ways in which any form of harassment is dealt with, result in the generally good behaviour around the school.
- The high expectations of pupils' conduct and the stimulation of a desire to learn contribute to effective lessons.
- The moral development of pupils as they move through the school is very good.
- Isolated incidents of bullying are dealt with very well.
- Absence of regular assemblies limits opportunities for spiritual reflection.

Commentary

14. The school's attendance figures are consistently well above average national figures. Almost all pupils have very good attendance records and punctuality is very good both at the start of the day and at lessons. The registration period is very short and so pupils know they have to be punctual. The systems for monitoring attendance and following up absence are excellent. Parents are contacted early on the first day of absence and every day until written notification is received. Where there are any attendance issues the school is well supported by external agencies directly employed by the school.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.1	School data	0.9
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

15. Behaviour around the school is generally good. Pupils are polite and friendly and have good relationships apart from isolated incidents of bullying, which are very well dealt with. Occurrences of poor behaviour in lessons which affect the learning of others are rare. A significantly strong feature of the school is the racial harmony that exists. The school has good policies on behaviour management with appropriate sanctions and rewards. When 'pushing and shoving' occurs it is often as a result of pupils' frustration when moving along the congested corridors.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Black or Black British – Caribbean

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
201	4	0
30	10	1
211	4	0
150	7	0
56	24	0

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

16. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The governors have not ensured that a regular collective act of worship takes place and the absence of regular assemblies results in too few opportunities for spiritual reflection. Pupils in the main school receive the required religious education provision but there are very few planned opportunities for reflection elsewhere and this limits pupils' level of spiritual and self-awareness. There was only one assembly during the week and this enabled pupils in Years 7 to 9 to reflect on Remembrance Day. Sixth form students organised prayer opportunities for Muslim pupils and students during Ramadan. The moral development of pupils is very good as a result of the strong promotion of racial harmony and the citizenship provision. Pupils clearly know right from wrong and show respect for each other's feelings, values and beliefs. The wide cultural mix within the school ensures that pupils share experiences and beliefs so that they become aware of the traditions of a wide range of cultures; this results in very good cultural development. The social development, though good, is limited by the need for restrictions in the small building which might be considered excessive in a more dispersed school – for example the lunchtime arrangements. Opportunities for responsibility and for contributing to school organisation are good. The school council is not at present very active but has clearly performed a useful role in previous years and is being re-launched under the direction of a recently appointed member of staff.

Sixth Form

17. Students in the sixth form are mostly mature and sensible although the degree of independent learning they are able to carry out varies greatly. They behave well and have very good attitudes to learning; they have formed very good relationships with each other and with staff. As part of their enrichment activities many students support pupils in the main school. Students are not required to register in the morning or to be in school when they have no lessons. They are registered in each lesson and attend regularly and punctually.

18. Provision for students' spiritual development is very limited. Although social development is somewhat limited by the restricted social space available for sixth form students, the overall social development is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- High levels of good and better teaching fully support high levels of good quality learning.
- Most teachers have very good subject knowledge and match this well to pupils' learning styles.
- Teachers insist on very high standards of behaviour, which results in productive learning environments.
- Lessons have good pace and high expectations are set.
- Weak specialist knowledge in design and technology and ICT has a detrimental effect on learning.

Commentary

19. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is very good, with some examples of outstanding teaching. This represents good improvement in teaching quality since the last inspection. The strategies introduced to monitor and improve performance and match teaching to pupils' learning styles have generally enabled pupils of all abilities to make good progress.

20. There are examples of high quality teaching in all subjects, with some excellent examples in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and art. Where teaching is at least good it fully supports pupils in their learning, achievement and progress in almost all subjects. However, weak specialist knowledge in design and technology and ICT has a detrimental effect on learning in some lessons.

21. Most teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects and understand how pupils learn. They use this knowledge to plan effectively for lessons, setting clear and challenging tasks to motivate pupils. In English the outstanding challenge of the tasks ensures that pupils progress at a very high level. In many subjects a range of teaching methods keep pupils interested and they are generally aware of lesson objectives, though lessons are sometimes too teacher led. Constructive questions and discussions at the end of lessons inform teachers about progress. By insisting on very high standards of behaviour, teachers ensure that pupils concentrate for the whole lesson. Most pupils understand their own targets and the standards they are achieving. Teachers create effective relationships with pupils, who respond positively to the respect and concern teachers show for them. Good homework is set regularly and used to enhance classroom activities.

22. In most lessons teachers use ongoing assessment well to provide guidance and assistance. In English, mathematics and modern foreign languages the level of assessment is very good and results in high standards at all levels. Teachers support and advise individual pupils to enable them to progress at an appropriate level. In most subjects pupils are aware of targets and are involved in assessing their own progress. Examination classes are made fully aware of the requirements of the examination and coursework.

23. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with SEN is very good and enables these pupils to make very good progress in extending knowledge and skills. As a result of high quality teaching and learning all pupils, irrespective of their ethnic origin, make very good progress.

24. The teaching of literacy is effective in many lessons and has a positive impact on pupils' learning, but the teaching of numeracy needs further development across subject departments.

Sixth Form

25. The quality of teaching and learning is good with some examples of outstanding teaching. Teaching is good in most subjects and very good in English, mathematics and Spanish. The impact of the good teaching is that students make good advances in both their knowledge and their understanding, as well as in their skills in practical subjects. Teachers use a number of different techniques effectively to track and monitor the progress of students. Students are encouraged to use the school's limited resources to expand their expertise through independent research. Students are very positive in general about their own work and would like more opportunities and a wider range of resources to augment their learning. Teachers provide good advice about work undertaken and how it can be improved through both individual support in lessons and helpful marking of students' work.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 155 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
11 (7%)	44 (28%)	62 (40%)	35 (23%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

Curriculum provision, including the enrichment curriculum, is good overall but statutory requirements are not met for National Curriculum design and technology in Years 7 to 9 and for ICT for all in Year 10.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A well constructed and flexible curriculum serves most pupils well.
- Plans for curriculum development are good and in line with current government initiatives.
- There are many opportunities for enrichment beyond the school day.
- Statutory requirements are not met for National Curriculum design and technology in Years 7 to 9 and for ICT for all in Year 10.
- Some classroom accommodation and some specialist facilities are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

26. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced but does not meet statutory requirements for design and technology. The National Curriculum Key Stage 3 Strategy is well established in English, mathematics and science. In these subjects, and also in geography, history and modern foreign languages, the revised schemes of work are very good and support teaching and learning, so that standards are rising. In other subjects the revised schemes are good but the extent to which they have contributed to improved teaching and learning varies. Most schemes of work include planning for pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT development, but the implementation of this again varies between departments. Planning to ensure that relevant aspects of pupils' personal development are addressed is not yet a feature of all schemes of work. Citizenship is taught separately and includes sex education and issues surrounding the misuse of alcohol and drugs. Multi-cultural religious education is delivered according to the local approved syllabus.

27. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is unusually flexible and meets the needs and interests of pupils well. It includes compulsory GCSE courses in English, mathematics, science and a modern foreign language. Citizenship and physical education are also compulsory. Pupils choose four other subjects from an impressive range of 28 subjects, all of which lead to nationally recognised qualifications. They include vocational courses, such as leisure and tourism and electronic systems, delivered in local colleges, which pupils attend for parts of each week. The enrichment programme is equally extensive in earlier years. However, the school is not meeting statutory requirements in respect of ICT for all pupils in Year 10. The development and availability of ICT across other subjects is variable and is currently unsatisfactory.

28. The management and development of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good and is part of the wider 14 to 19 curriculum plan. The plan has been thoroughly researched and a good action plan is being implemented including improved links with other institutions. Transition from Year 11 to post-16 study or work and from Year 9 to Year 10 is carefully planned.

29. In addition to the taught curriculum, the school offers a wide range of out-of-hours learning, enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Most subjects offer lunchtime or after-school lessons, individual tuition or clubs including sporting events, music and drama activities, art and ICT. There are day trips to theatres, museums and field-study centres and to France. On Armistice Day, a group of pupils gave a moving assembly presentation based on their visit to the First World War battlegrounds of Northern France. Opportunities to take part in extra-curricular competitive sporting activities are limited by financial restraints.

30. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship at any stage and so does not meet statutory requirements. The match of qualified teachers and learning resources to the curriculum is generally good, except in ICT where too many non-specialists teach the subject.

The accommodation is unsatisfactory because there are too few classrooms or recreation areas and many classrooms are too small to allow group work. The accommodation for physical education is poor.

Sixth Form

31. The sixth form curriculum is broad and balanced. Students create programmes of study from combinations of a wide variety of academic, vocational and enrichment courses. The development of students' key skills, including literacy, numeracy and ICT, is integral to all the courses of study. The very limited provision for religious education does not meet statutory requirements. To help the development of their social skills, students are encouraged to contribute to the community. Students are well prepared for the world of work, further training or higher education.

32. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is no separate sixth form area to allow students to experience independence or to study and socialise as a group of young adults.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares for, guides and supports pupils very well. The focus on using data to enhance pupils' performance is very strong in both the main school and the sixth form. Systems to involve pupils through seeking their views and valuing and acting on them are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The support, advice and guidance provided by the 'Review Tutor' system are excellent.
- The school has very good provision to ensure the health and welfare of pupils, including appropriate child protection procedures and good medical facilities.
- The school has very good induction arrangements for new pupils.
- Systems for pupils to be involved in the operation of the school, for example through the school council, are not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

33. The school has comprehensive procedures for child protection and all the staff within the school receive basic training. The child protection officer is named in procedures and is well supported by other staff experienced in child protection issues. The school liaises well with external agencies and provides appropriate support for the one pupil who is in the care of the local authority. A particularly strong feature in the school is the way it follows up absence to ensure the safety and welfare of the pupils. To provide additional support within the school a counsellor is employed for three days a week and behaviour support is 'bought in' for one day a week.

34. The building is well maintained and health and safety issues are well addressed. Regular health and safety inspections are carried out and governors are fully involved. The school carries out regular fire drills and records of equipment safety checks are comprehensive. The school has an Internet access policy which is enforced. The school is very compact with unavoidable congestion points during lesson changes. The movement of pupils is well managed by timetabling most lessons as double lessons and enforcing a one-way system on stairways.

35. The school has replaced the conventional tutor system with a 'Review Tutor' system which is providing excellent advice and guidance for pupils. The morning and afternoon registration periods are only five minutes long and tutors deal only with routine matters. Each pupil has a review tutor who has regular one-to-one interviews with them at least once in each half term. Staff are allocated time for this activity and it is well timetabled. Several of these sessions were observed during the inspection. They were carried out extremely well, demonstrating close relationships between tutor and pupil with excellent advice and guidance. The comprehensive records kept ensure that the advice is based on good monitoring. There are good links with the primary school, which ensures

that information about pupils is known to the school so that initial banding can be carried out and a baseline assessment produced for each pupil. Induction of pupils into the school is very good.

36. Pupils have opportunities to be involved in the school in a variety of ways including peer counsellors, form captains, librarians, recycling team, equal opportunities team, press group, Year 7 buddies, fundraising activities, paired readers, and some pupils are involved with the school council. The school council is an area that requires further development to ensure that all pupils know of its purpose and that feedback to pupils is provided on a formal basis.

Sixth Form

37. Sixth form students benefit from an increased frequency of review sessions with a tutor who is carefully selected to be able to give advice on their subjects. Their welfare is ensured by the main school systems. A student council is in the early stages of operation but is not yet fully effective. Sixth form students have involvement in the operation of the school through peer mentoring and supporting pupils in the main school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good links with parents. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are good for both the main school and the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A good partnership with parents.
- A good partnership with other schools and with the community.
- The process of seeking, considering and using parents' views is less active than parents would wish.

Commentary

38. Parents are generally supportive of the school although a small minority are very unhappy with several aspects. Only 16 per cent of parents returned the questionnaires but a significant number of these were concerned about the lack of information about their children's progress and the lack of opportunities for them to express their views. Parents also identified some bad behaviour and some bullying within the school. A number of parents also thought the school was not easy to approach about problems and that some children were not treated fairly. Although concerned about the information on progress, they were very pleased with the actual progress made in the school and thought that the staff work hard and teaching is good. The concerns raised by parents, both individually and from the questionnaires, were considered during the inspection and contribute to the findings in the report.

39. The information on pupils' progress comprises a good report each year supported by individual interviews with the review tutors before the parent/teacher evening to allow parents to focus on specific issues during those discussions. Parents also receive a high quality prospectus for the main school or the post-16 courses together with informative well-produced newsletters; the school also has a website. Parents clearly receive good information on progress but they clearly would like it more frequently. The school uses a planner for pupils to allow parents to monitor the work and to communicate with the school. The effectiveness of this is limited as it depends on staff and parents being consistent in its use. This is one problem which arises from the very short daily contact with tutors, as the system relies heavily on class teachers who have limited time to check pupils' planners. Several parents had expressed interest in supporting the school through a parent teacher association, and the headteacher, in conjunction with governors, is currently reviewing how best to involve parents more. The school has carried out parental surveys on such issues as homework. Strong pastoral links enable the health co-ordinator to meet parents to discuss problems.

40. The school has good links with the community and pupils benefit from a good range of guest speakers and visits to the local community and beyond. The partnership is demonstrated by the willingness of local businesses to accept pupils on work placements. There are links through sport and arts but parents felt that the involvement of the local community by attendance at concerts and other school events was diminishing.

41. The school has established productive links with its primary feeder schools and these are being further developed as the school pursues its bid for specialist status. Good and productive partnerships have been established with other secondary schools as the school has developed a broader curriculum for the older pupils. The south west area network (SWAN), part of the national Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative, enables collaborative professional development with other colleagues in all subject areas and management roles across the 20 schools in the partnership.

Sixth Form

42. Several parents expressed concerns about the increase this year in the size of the sixth form which has resulted in inadequate provision of space and resources. This is an issue that the school is aware of and needs to be addressed if the sixth form is to maintain its popularity. The sixth form benefits from the close partnerships that have been developed with other schools, for example with Four Dwelling High School, which have resulted in the recruitment of additional students. Partnerships also exist which enhance the opportunities for enrichment activities through courses off site.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management of the school are good. Leadership is good overall and the leadership of the headteacher is very good. Management is good overall with some elements where it is very good. The governance of the school is unsatisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good.
- Curriculum leadership and management are very good.
- The overall governance of the school is unsatisfactory because governors do not ensure that the school meets statutory requirements.

Commentary

43. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Her energetic approach to 'seeking to improve' is based on a strong desire to tailor the school to meet the needs of all groups of learners. Her determination to introduce 'individualised learning' has had a strong and positive impact on pupils' achievements. For example, the introduction of learning mentors to encourage and support Year 11 pupils has meant that their outlook and self belief have improved and subsequently so have their academic standards.

44. The headteacher inspires a sense of respect from those around her so that leadership at all levels is good and in some curriculum areas very good. Senior managers adopt a 'hands on' approach to problem solving and are very good role models. For instance, their support and work with the English department have been instrumental in overcoming difficulties and enabling staff to teach well so that pupils make good progress in both their academic and personal development.

45. The leadership of the SEN provision is good. The co-ordinator has worked hard to shape a school-wide approach to meeting the needs of these pupils; this is good improvement since the last inspection.

46. The secret of the success of the school is related to a cohesive senior management team which relentlessly strives for higher standards. Visitors to the school cannot help but notice the open, co-operative and collegiate approach which exists between them. The management structure is not hierarchical and this encourages a team approach where all staff shoulder responsibility and share and listen to each others' views. The putting together of a successful bid for specialist school status is clear testament to this.

47. There are good management systems in place which fully support teachers and pupils; this includes analysing a wide range of performance and assessment data that in most cases directly influences teachers, teaching methods and pupils' performance. The management of most curriculum areas is very good. The school performance management systems are rigorous and the outcomes have beneficial effects on classroom practice and pupils' learning.

48. The school is forward thinking and never stands still. Leaders and managers are innovative and want what is right for pupils. The school is at the fore front of seeking partnership with others to improve the provision for youngsters. This has resulted in: business sponsorships; improved sixth form provision for boys and students with learning difficulties; and broadening vocational options by working with local colleges.

49. Trail blazing has also been a feature of financial management so that it is not surprising that there are very good systems in place. Procedures for dealing with financial planning are well established and rigorous. The finance officer has an excellent day-to-day grasp of the school's finances and budgetary control. Specific grants, including Excellence in Cities (EiC) funds, are used effectively and for their designated purpose. The school monitors its performance effectively in accordance with the principles of best value and gives very good value for money.

50. School governors are fully involved through effective sub-committee structures in strategic and development planning for school improvement. The governors hold the management to account at all stages and levels. They make robust decisions about spending and budgetary control. Performance management procedures are in place and are monitored by the governing body. However, the overall governance of the school is unsatisfactory because the governing body does not ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in relation to: daily worship; National Curriculum requirements for design and technology in Years 7 to 9; ICT for all pupils in Year 10 and across the curriculum; religious education in the sixth form; and the contents of their annual report to parents.

Sixth Form

51. The leadership and management in the sixth form are good. The leadership team are enthusiastic and have been very successful in increasing the number of students entering the sixth form from both the main school and other local schools.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2, 659, 857.27
Total expenditure	2, 621, 201.63
Expenditure per pupil	3,124.20

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	916.00
Balance carried forward to the next	38, 385.64

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Results in national tests in 2003 at the end of Year 9 were outstanding.
- Results in the GCSE in 2003 for both language and literature are significantly above the national average.
- Teaching is very good, resulting in pupils' high standards of attainment, behaviour and commitment.
- Leadership and management are very strong.

Commentary

52. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were significantly above the national average and continued the overall improving trend of the last three years. These results were very high when compared with results in similar schools. In the GCSE in 2003, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in language and literature was significantly above the national average of all pupils and well above the national average for girls. Performance for media studies in the GCSE in 2003 showed a marked improvement upon that of the previous year, which was below average. The first groups of pupils in the school to take GCSE drama achieved results in 2003 above the national average of recent years.

53. The achievement of pupils at the end of Year 9 is excellent. They join the school with levels of literacy below average and in three years achieve very high standards in national tests. The quality of work seen in lessons matches this judgement. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is very good, and standards are very high. Pupils of different ethnic heritage perform equally well, as a direct result of the great effort made in the department to analyse specific needs and to meet them. Pupils with SEN make good progress but there is too little support for them in some classes.

54. The overall standard of speaking and listening is above average. Pupils listen attentively and work effectively in pairs and small groups. In drama lessons they collaborate particularly well when preparing presentations. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds answer questions equally well. Responses are, in the main, articulate and considered. In Years 10 and 11 pupils offer increasingly mature, sensitive and coherent comments, especially about set texts.

55. Pupils' general standard of reading comprehension is above average. The minority who join the school with a reading age below their actual age receive intensive support and make good progress. Pupils identify accurately key features such as plot, themes and characters. They use the appropriate language of literary criticism with increasing confidence. Media studies are an important part of the curriculum and pupils become familiar with a new range of relevant technical terms. In Years 10 and 11 pupils read more complex texts and respond to them with high levels of appreciation and understanding.

56. The overall standard of written work throughout the main school is well above average. Writing is very carefully presented. Pupils write effectively for a range of audiences and purposes. As part of their media studies they write convincingly to persuade and influence. By the end of Year 11 most pupils write fluently and accurately both in literary and non-literary contexts. The best writing of high attaining pupils is well planned, skilfully crafted and correct in detail and has a sense of individual style.

57. The overall quality of teaching in the main school is very good. In Years 7, 8 and 9 it is good in almost all lessons and is very good in half of them. Teaching is always good in Years 10 and 11 and is very good or better in over half of lessons. There is a higher than usual percentage of excellent teaching. High academic standards are set and pupils are very thoroughly prepared for tests and examinations. Teachers make tasks very clear and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Relationships between the pupils and their teachers are very positive resulting in pupils' sustained concentration and commitment. Teachers plan thoroughly and manage pupils with great skill. Assessment is very good and work is marked conscientiously with much constructive comment and guidance for improvement.

58. The work of the department combines successfully English, media studies and drama. Documentation is very thorough and all staff are very well informed about pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers make the best of limited, cramped accommodation but the present drama studio is far too small for large groups and has inadequate lighting and other facilities. The department makes good use of ICT both as a teaching aid and for administration. The collegiate management approach is very good and combines very effectively the experience and expertise of established staff with the new impetus of recent appointments. The department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school. There has been marked improvement since the last report in results, the quality of teaching and in the breadth of curricular provision.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. The knowledge, understanding and practice of literacy across all curriculum areas is better than in many schools. All departments have a literacy policy which is included in schemes of work. The overall standard of speaking across the curriculum is good, and pupils generally listen attentively. A stimulating mixture of discussions, presentations and role play is used in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, information technology and modern foreign languages. In geography and history a range of strategies are effectively used to assist pupils' reading. Special mathematical dictionaries are used and key words are displayed and referred to in many subjects. Writing frames are well used in geography and history.

60. A management group responsible for implementing the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has developed the cross-curricular aspect. All staff have been trained and much valuable research has been done. It revealed, for example, that in most subjects pupils of different ethnic heritage perform equally well. Much work is still in progress but the successful practice already in place provides proof of good management of this important aspect of learning.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Above average standards in all years in Spanish and French.
- Very good teaching with some outstanding features.
- Very positive attitudes of pupils result in very good progress in lessons and good achievement overall.
- Management and leadership are very strong.
- Extra-curricular opportunities and the support for gifted pupils are very good features.
- Pupils are often unwilling to use the foreign language to seek help and ask questions.
- Information and communication technology is not regularly used in lessons.

Commentary

61. Standards in both Spanish and French and the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils' comprehension skills are particularly strong and most pupils have a very sound grasp of basic grammar which they can apply correctly in written and spoken language. Pronunciation is usually very good and abler pupils are already showing high levels of oral confidence and fluency. Recent results at GCSE in Spanish show a consistent trend of above average results. In French there has been a substantial improvement; the most recent results are well above average. Standards of pupils' work in Years 10 to 11 are frequently above average. Those of able linguists in the top sets are well above average in all language skills and their comprehension of the foreign language is especially strong. Such able pupils also have a very solid basis of vocabulary and a firm grasp of tenses and other grammatical points.

62. Pupils achieve well in all years. They make very good progress in lessons and over time they have developed very good levels of listening comprehension. Pupils have little difficulty in understanding foreign language instructions in the classroom. They retain and reproduce a wide range of vocabulary and speak with good attention to correct pronunciation and grammatical accuracy. Lower ability pupils and those with SEN make equally good progress whilst abler pupils achieve particularly well because of the challenging tasks that they are set and the high levels of fluency that they show in their oral work. Pupils do not, however, as yet use the foreign language to seek help or to ask questions without prompting.

63. The quality of teaching is particularly high with some outstanding features. Teachers are excellent linguists. They plan their lessons very well with clear developmental structures and use a wide range of appropriate resources to present new material that encourages pupils' participation. All lessons are characterised by a brisk pace, very good use of time and a balance of tasks to ensure that pupils are fully involved in their learning. Teachers use the foreign language consistently for classroom communication and lay a strong emphasis upon pupils' acquisition of grammar. This provides a sound basis for pupils to make very good progress, especially in their understanding of spoken and written language as well as in the development of their oral confidence. Pupils have a very positive attitude to their language studies and their behaviour is usually excellent.

64. Management of the department is very strong and the curriculum leader is a very good role model for her colleagues. Under her clear direction the department functions very well as a team and teachers support and complement one another very well through their different responsibilities. Consequently there is a consistency of approach in which teachers set themselves high standards. In-depth monitoring of results and regular review procedures on pupils' progress lead to focused action to improve standards. The unusually high number of extra-curricular opportunities provided by visits abroad, community links and club activities, as well as the additional support for gifted pupils, contribute to raising the profile of modern foreign languages in the school.

65. Since the last inspection there has been a substantial improvement in standards in French both at GCSE and overall in Years 8 to 11. In Spanish the above average results at GCSE have been sustained. Standards and results by the end of Year 9 have also improved and are now above average. Teaching quality has also improved markedly. Information and communication technology is now evident in schemes of work and in displayed work but it is still not yet fully used in lessons.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils are making very good progress from Year 7 to Year 11.
- Pupils work hard and want to learn.
- Teaching and learning are very good and some is excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good, focusing on raising standards.
- Some groups of lower attaining pupils do not have the regular support of teaching assistants.

Commentary

66. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Results in the end of Year 9 tests in 2003 are good when compared with schools nationally and are very high compared with similar schools, indicating very good pupil progress from Year 7 to Year 9. Standards of attainment are now higher than at the last inspection. GCSE results in 2003 were above average. The attainment of the present pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good, reflecting the recently improved standards achieved in Years 7 to 9.

67. The standard of work seen in the current Years 7 to 9 is well above average and reflects pupils' increasing confidence and competence in all areas of mathematics. They extend their knowledge of number, algebra, geometry and handling data. They become adept at managing fractions, decimals and percentages and even the lowest attaining pupils are skilful in working out percentages. Higher attaining pupils can solve and sketch the graphs of complex equations. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 is also well above average. The highest attaining pupils sit the GCSE examination a year early. Other Year 11 pupils confidently manipulate equations to solve problems relating to spheres and solve problems in circle geometry. Pupils at all levels display a mature attitude towards the examination course.

68. Overall, the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is very good and is better than at the last inspection. Some teaching is excellent and none is less than satisfactory. Lessons begin with 'starters', which allow pupils to practise mental arithmetic, reinforce basic skills or focus on new skills. They include a variety of activities to help pupils achieve their learning objectives and to ensure they experience challenge. Pupils are encouraged to work independently by being given regular homework, and to work collaboratively through small-group discussion and problem solving. At the end of most lessons, teachers inform the pupils of the extent of their successes but do not necessarily record this information to help them adjust their planning of following lessons. Where teaching is excellent, planning is meticulous, expectations are very high and teacher/pupil relationships are strong. Teachers are skilful in making pupils think in order to ensure maximum learning. They continuously assess pupils' progress and adjust questions, explanations and activities to match the learning styles of individuals or the needs of those who need extra help or extra challenge. All teachers are generous with praise for effort, which encourages pupils to work hard and to enjoy learning.

69. Pupils with particular needs are sometimes given valuable support by teaching assistants but some classes of lower attaining pupils do not benefit from such support on a regular basis. The quality of marking of most teachers is good, with comments of encouragement and advice. Pupils' development in literacy, particularly in speaking and listening, is good because teachers encourage them to explain how they have solved problems. Pupils are disadvantaged by the department's restricted access to the school's ICT suites. However, the out-of-school-time mathematics clinics and challenge clubs enhance the mathematics provision.

70. The department has an exceptionally strong team of experienced, conscientious and effective teachers. The curriculum leader has established effective teamwork and strong management of the department, which has brought about the necessary changes to raise standards. The subject improvement plan focuses on standards and, to achieve this end, on the quality of teaching and learning. Good assessment, target setting and tracking records have been introduced and are being maintained well enough by most but not all teachers. The curriculum leader has already identified the need to introduce more rigorous monitoring procedures and an increased use of ICT.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. Pupils' mathematical skills in other curricular areas are good and this enables them to enhance their learning in many, but not all, subjects. In science, pupils' mathematical skills are used effectively to collect and interpret data, to take measurements and to make various calculations in physics. In geography, pupils apply their mathematical skills very well by using co-ordinates during map reading exercises and are competent in analysing data displayed graphically. Pupils' skills are also applied very well in history, particularly in the interpretation of graphs. In ICT a group working on the preparation of invoices showed accurate calculations. In design and technology, pupils measured accurately and used appropriate techniques when representing data as graphs.

72. The mathematics department has provided training in the use of numeracy across the curriculum and has produced a useful reference handbook. A survey of the extent of the use of numeracy in other subjects has taken place to identify where and when particular topics are being taught. The mathematics department's initiative, while not yet complete, is proving to be effective in ensuring that pupils have every opportunity to develop their numerical skills and that their skills are applied appropriately.

SCIENCE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Exam results are good and are improving.
- Teachers' expert subject knowledge makes lessons effective.
- Well-planned lessons make good use of the time available.
- Good teaching is promoting good learning.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- The quantity and quality of resources for teaching science are inadequate to support teaching and learning fully.
- The use of non-specialist accommodation for teaching science limits opportunities for practical work.
- The continuity of employment and the management of laboratory technicians limit their effectiveness in supporting teaching and learning.

Commentary

73. Results of national tests for Year 9 pupils in 2003 were above the national average for girls, well above average for the pupils' prior attainment and very high compared with similar schools. They have improved each year since 1999. Results in the GCSE dual award science examinations in 2003 were close to the national average and above those of the previous year. In the separate sciences, biology and chemistry were above average and physics below, but there was an overall improvement on the previous year's results. Results are well above the average for similar schools. There has been a steady improvement from a low point in 2001.

74. The standard of pupils' work seen in Year 9 is above average. By Year 9 pupils have studied a range of topics and particularly enjoy learning about the structure and function of their own bodies. Standards seen in dual award science in Year 11 are close to average and in the separate subjects above average overall. Pupils understand balanced chemical equations and can use them to calculate the amount of a product produced in a reaction. Lower attaining pupils have a working knowledge of photosynthesis. Standards of presentation of work are high and some drawings are excellent, but curved graph lines are poorly drawn and diagrams of apparatus are often little more than sketches.

75. Pupils' achievement is good. They enter school with below average standards, make good progress and leave with standards a little above average. Pupils in Year 11 build on work from earlier years to study increasingly difficult material to a greater depth. They use mathematics to deal with a range of physical or chemical equations and develop a wide knowledge of scientific topics.

76. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned. The best include a variety of activities which maintain pupils' interest and make learning effective. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good; pupils behave well and concentrate on their work. Well-structured lessons allow all pupils to make good progress. Pupils with SEN learn well because teachers reinforce new material frequently to ensure that all understand. In high attaining classes, teachers ask searching questions and younger pupils are introduced to difficult concepts early in their school career. The marking of pupils' work by teachers praises good work and provides useful advice on how pupils can improve standards. Groups co-operate well and pupils work safely in experimental sessions.

77. Overall, leadership and management are good. There is clear vision for future development, day-to-day organisation is good, and teachers are deployed to make best use of their expert knowledge so that teaching is effective. There is a detailed scheme of work but pupils are provided with less practical work than would be expected.

78. Resources for teaching science are poor. There is a shortage of apparatus and a need for up-to-date physics equipment for use in GCSE and the new Advanced Level course. There are not enough specialist teaching areas so more than one in eight lessons takes place in a classroom. Information and communication technology is not used consistently to enhance teaching and learning. There have been difficulties recruiting trained laboratory technicians. As a result, routine maintenance, repair and stocktaking have not been carried out efficiently. Lines of communication with the technicians are ambiguous. When supply technicians are employed their supervisor should understand, and be trained in, the risks and hazards associated with preparing and using corrosive, flammable, toxic or radioactive materials. Problems with resources, accommodation and recruitment of technicians reduce practical opportunities; theoretical work is not exemplified by practical example and graph-drawing skills are underdeveloped.

79. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Test and exam results have improved and the standard of teaching and learning is higher.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Improved resources now provide wider access to more pupils.
- The new director of ICT has already introduced measures to raise standards.
- The introduction of the national strategy now provides a more relevant course in Years 7 to 9.
- Not all pupils in Years 10 receive their statutory entitlement to ICT.
- Insecure subject knowledge of many non-specialist teachers means that pupils do not progress as quickly as they should.
- Higher attaining pupils are not achieving as well as they should.
- Pupils are not involved in setting targets and assessing their own progress.

Commentary

80. In 2003, standards in Year 9 as judged by teachers' assessments were above average. However, the work inspected suggests that these assessments were too generous and that standards are just about average. This represents good achievement from pupils' below average attainment when they entered the school. The new national curriculum strategy for ICT is currently raising the standard of work in Years 7 and 8.

81. The Year 11 results in all the vocational courses were average, representing satisfactory achievement overall. The results for the pupils who undertook the full course, which enjoyed a greater time allocation, were above average.

82. In Years 7 to 9 pupils use a range of skills to create colourful and animated slide presentations, but these often contain far too much text. They analyse data imported from the Internet and present information in graphs, but do not refine the data or use it effectively in a personal information system. They describe how they use ICT in school, but make no comparisons with the use outside school.

83. In Years 10 and 11 pupils examine the use of ICT in a business context. They understand how different input and output devices are used, displaying this information in clear tables. They design business documents but do not comment on their suitability. They use advanced software to design floor plans for offices, but do not realise they have to be drawn to scale. They work together to produce presentations with a corporate style, including hyperlinks, action buttons and effective animation and sound.

84. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. However, the large number of non-specialist teachers, who are not always secure in their subject knowledge, means that pupils do not progress as quickly as they should. Teachers prepare adequately, but do not set tasks which extend higher attaining pupils. Teaching enables pupils to develop basic skills, but not to extend or apply them. Teachers do not always assess how well pupils have progressed in lessons. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good or better. In better lessons, preparation is thorough, and appealing tasks keep pupils interested. However, in weaker lessons tasks do not challenge higher attaining pupils so they do not achieve as well as they should. Teachers do not involve pupils sufficiently in setting or assessing their targets. Pupils of all ethnic backgrounds achieve similarly. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress.

85. The newly appointed director of communications technology has recognised the need to develop ICT to enable all pupils to attain standards matching their ability. She has the vision to establish effective strategies and has already initiated developments to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards higher. The new course in Years 7 to 9 is already raising standards. In Year 11 all pupils also have lessons in ICT but in Year 10 less than half do so. This is

unsatisfactory and fails to meet statutory requirements. The large number of non-specialist teachers makes it difficult to develop a consistent approach. An experienced and enthusiastic technician supports teachers well.

86. Improvement in teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 has helped to raise standards. However, there is still too much non-specialist teaching which does not make full use of the improved resources. Assessment procedures need to be further developed to involve pupils. Improvement since the previous inspection is only satisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

87. Pupils of all ages are confident using ICT but are not given enough opportunities to use the technology to enhance their learning in a range of subjects. The lack of appropriate hardware limits the development of music learning, and the use of ICT in design and technology does not fully meet statutory requirements. Art has some areas of development such as photography but basic elements are missing. Geography and history make some use of ICT while English makes good use.

88. A number of rooms equipped with modern technology are available for other departments. However, the system for allocating these rooms seems to be faulty, as they are sometimes booked for lessons which do not require computer equipment. Although the school's overall computer to pupil ratio is above average, no room has more than 25 computers, so in larger classes pupils cannot have individual use of a computer.

89. The management of cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory. There are no structures for plotting what ICT experiences departments provide for pupils. The delivery of these experiences is not monitored or evaluated to ensure that pupils are receiving their entitlement.

90. There has been less than significant improvement since the previous inspection in relation to the provision of ICT across the curriculum, except in the number of computers available to teachers and pupils. This is unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of geography that support effective learning.
- The good attitudes of the pupils to their learning support the above average standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11.
- A comprehensive range of fieldwork activities develops the interest of the pupils in the study of geography and supports their good progress.
- The effectiveness of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is inconsistent because the existing very good teaching practices are not yet being used by all members of the new team.

Commentary

91. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show that pupils are working at the national expectation. This represents good progress from below average standards on entry. Present standards in Year 9 confirm this and indicate good achievement. The GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average and were consistent with the previous year, although in comparison with other similar schools they were at national expectations. There has been a steadily improving trend in standards in Year 11. The standard of work seen in the current Year 11 is above national expectations and represents good achievement. Pupils with SEN make good progress in all years.

92. By Year 9 pupils have acquired good geographical skills, including the effective analysis of maps and photographs, the good use of different graphs, and the ability to draw sound conclusions from the wide range of fieldwork that is an important factor in pupils' interest in the subject. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills, both of which contribute well to the good progress made in the subject. By Year 11 pupils have developed good research skills and use these to interpret information about world population. They have a good understanding of the cause and effect of such issues as the Turkish workers' migration to Germany or the impact of earthquakes and floods in the Far East.

93. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years, with a wider range, from very good to satisfactory, in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Most lessons are characterised by teachers' very good subject knowledge and by very good planning and organisation, using varied strategies to make learning interesting. The most successful lessons have good opportunities for paired and group work and teachers' high expectations result in a fast learning pace. In a few lessons planning is less effective and the pace of learning is comfortable rather than challenging. The consistency of pupils' learning will improve when the existing very good teaching practices are shared fully with the new team. At present the good attitudes of the pupils and the very good relationships give good support for learning particularly in Years 10 and 11.

94. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision of further improvement, with schemes of work regularly reviewed and assessment strategies improved and developed. The systematic monitoring of pupils' achievement is particularly effective. Some use is made of ICT in the provision for geography. The accommodation is satisfactory although the second specialist room is rather small for developing effective map skills. Improvement since the previous inspection is good as the department has systematically reviewed and improved a wide range of procedures. In particular pupils' standards and resulting achievement have steadily improved over this period.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good leadership of the department has developed an effective team which is focused on raising standards.
- Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good and reflects the very positive attitudes pupils have towards the subject.
- Relationships are very good throughout the department.
- The teachers are very enthusiastic and their command of the subject is very good. Their high expectations of the pupils support the very good achievement.
- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are improving because of the recent revision of the curriculum and the use of a widening range of learning strategies.

Commentary

95. The most recent teachers' assessments indicate that standards are at the national expectation. However, improvements and changes to the range of learning opportunities since then have improved pupils' understanding and resulted in rising standards. Currently the standard of work seen in Year 11 is above the national average and reflects a considerable improvement on the GCSE results in 2003, which were well below average.

96. Achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is very good. They begin the subject below national expectations but develop their historical understanding quickly through a good range of learning activities. By Year 9, pupils develop a broad range of historical skills, including the interpretation of primary and secondary data, timelines and causation. Achievement by Year 11 is good because pupils have developed a good understanding of historical facts and good research skills, which are used effectively in the writing of their coursework. Pupils use ICT well to extend their knowledge and understanding, although regular access for all classes is difficult. In the last year the GCSE curriculum has changed to reflect the interests of the pupils more closely, and a wider range of learning strategies has strengthened all pupils' understanding and has had a positive impact on their attainment. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN and different ethnic backgrounds, achieve well and make good progress.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years with some very good teaching in Year 9. Pupils learn very well in groups, in pairs and individually. In most lessons pupils' involvement is very high with challenging learning activities. Teachers' expectations are very high and pupils respond to the challenge very well. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is very good; there is an excitement in the classroom that is infectious, and both the pace and the variety of learning activities are impressive. An excellent role play took place between the teacher and the teaching assistant in a Year 9 class and this immediately captured the girls' interest and ensured that the learning was very good. Effective question and answer sessions are a particular feature in Years 10 and 11 and enable pupils to learn well, especially in studying how the Nazis gained from the world depression. Relationships through the department are a strength and enable pupils to make good progress with the support of teachers and assistants.

98. Improvement since the last inspection is good and the improvement in the quality of teaching is particularly noticeable. Under able new leadership and management the department has in the last year reviewed the schemes of work and extended the range of learning resources particularly in the GCSE course. As a result standards are improving rapidly in Years 10 and 11. Effective assessment processes in Years 7 to 9 are now in place. The accommodation is satisfactory. This is a rapidly improving department with a strong focus on developing pupils' learning activities and raising standards still further.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is good, with excellent leadership of discussions.
- Leadership and management are very effective.
- Opportunities to use ICT in lessons are limited.

Commentary

99. Standards in religious education in Years 7 to 9 are as expected by the locally agreed syllabus and improving. Teaching motivates pupils to achieve well.

100. In 2003, in both full and short GCSE courses, results were overall in line with national results for all pupils. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 work towards a GCSE short course examination and numbers opting for the full course are increasing. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are average. A significant minority of pupils in all years are working at above expected levels. Overall, pupils are achieving well.

101. By Year 9 pupils recognise that religious education involves the active acquisition of knowledge and understanding about various aspects of world religions. When given a choice of which religion to study, pupils often choose one other than their own.

102. In Year 11, pupils discuss moral issues, such as prejudice, with maturity, drawing perceptively on their own experiences to exemplify their views. The very good relationships amongst the pupils enhance the quality of discussion because they listen carefully to points of view other than their own. They speak and exchange ideas confidently. Pupils in Year 11 used intelligent discussion and research to write about *What is Truth* and *The Part Religion Plays in Today's Society*. The diversity of pupils' religious and ethnic backgrounds enriches all aspects of their work in religious education. The study of Christianity and the major world religions makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In all lessons opportunities are given for the discussion of beliefs and values and for pupils to think and reflect.

103. Teaching and learning are overall good. Strengths lie in teachers' very good subject knowledge and the interesting variety of teaching methods used to meet the needs of all pupils including those with SEN. Teachers' leadership of discussion is excellent, as seen in one Year 11 lesson on *The effect of the Media on Religion*. Standards of behaviour are high and this is having a positive impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject in all years.

104. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The school has recently appointed a well-qualified head of department who has introduced thorough assessment systems and revised all schemes of work. Some classes are taught in non-specialist rooms and this environment is not as stimulating as the designated room. Although pupils use ICT at home, opportunities are limited within religious education lessons.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The recently appointed curriculum co-ordinator has instigated rapid improvement.
- GCSE examination results have improved.
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in Years 7 to 9.
- Limited specialist knowledge limits pupils' ability to acquire higher order knowledge and skills.
- Provision for ICT is inadequate and this affects standards.

Commentary

105. Pupils enter the school with standards that are below average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 showed pupils achieving above average standards. However, evidence from the inspection shows that standards are below average. This discrepancy is explained by teachers' inexperience in grading this subject. Fewer pupils than would normally be seen in a similar school choose to take the subject in Years 10 and 11. These pupils achieve average standards.

106. Examination results in 2003 for the newly introduced product design course are average when compared with all schools. This is an improvement on the previous year when pupils taking graphic products achieved well below average standards.

107. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below those expected nationally for pupils of all abilities including those with SEN. No difference in the relative performance of different ethnic groups was observed. By the end of Year 9 pupils do not have an understanding of the design process. They have good ideas for their designs, learn practical skills, and make products which on the whole are fit for the purpose and look attractive. However, their folios to support the work are not well organised and maintained, and many are incomplete. Good drawing skills are a feature of the work and pupils can use colour effectively to enhance their design ideas. Standards have been adversely affected by the absence of the food technology teacher on secondment, because this aspect of work is restricted.

108. Pupils in Year 10 learn to use the design process and are able to apply this knowledge to solve design problems in resistant materials. They are at an early stage in learning to plan their work by producing sequence drawings showing progression from earlier work. Pupils in Year 11 talk confidently about their ideas for solving a design problem when completing coursework. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are sufficient for the demands of the subject. They do not have easy access to computers when needed and this affects standards. Overall standards throughout the subject are constrained because key aspects of the national curriculum are not provided, for example systems and control and computer aided design and manufacture. The accommodation is poor. Pupils work in cramped conditions and a lack of suitable storage results in damaged and lost work.

109. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although limited specialist knowledge adversely affects pupils' learning of the higher order knowledge and skills. National curriculum levels in technology are not used accurately to assess pupils' work in Years 7 to 9, so pupils do not have a clear idea of what needs to improve. Pupils show interest in practical work and behave well; this helps them to learn practical skills.

110. The department is emerging from a period of turbulence: two subject departments have been merged to form a design curriculum area, and there have been staffing difficulties, some of which are not yet resolved. Leadership of the department is now good. The curriculum leader has recently identified what needs to be done and there is clear direction to move the department forward. Progress has been made in raising standards. Management is satisfactory. However, significant sections of the national curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are not taught and statutory requirements are not met; teaching and learning need to be more closely monitored in this respect. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection because of recent improvement. Some health and safety issues were identified to the department.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

The provision for art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of teaching is very good in all years, leading to very effective learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good; pupils rise well to the opportunities that are offered for independent learning.
- Curriculum leadership is strong and recent innovations are proving successful.
- The use of computers is unsatisfactory, so denying pupils the opportunity to explore this rapidly expanding field of art.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and storage facilities are poor, creating difficulties of access and in organisation of lessons in multi-use rooms.

Commentary

111. Pupils enter the school with a very wide range of experiences in art and standards which are below expectations. Pupils, including those with SEN, make very good progress through their time in the department, but this has yet to show through in public examination results. These are currently below national averages, although there are outstanding individual achievements across all aspects of the subject and there is a rising trend in results. Pupils who took the GCSE art and the textiles examination in 2003 achieved results that were above averages for similar schools.

112. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all years. The excellent command that teachers have of their subject areas, and the confident and enthusiastic teaching that has shown through in lessons, indicate an improving department. Pupils are keen to experiment and learn from the good curriculum they are offered. They respond well to teachers' high expectations of good behaviour and standards of work. The very good relationships that characterise lessons support a harmonious, relaxed, enjoyable and industrious atmosphere for learning. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for the development of their work; they grow in confidence as independent learners as they explore and develop their art skills. Their research skills are well developed as the demands for annotation and note taking increase over time.

113. The art department has been through a very difficult and disruptive time as curriculum innovations have been introduced. The strong faculty leadership, ably supported by the curriculum leader for art, has enabled the department to re-build a strong teaching team. Because of this the department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

114. Teachers and pupils work well in the unsatisfactory accommodation, although there are times when the multi-use of rooms and the cramped conditions for working create difficulties for both. The department's resources for computer-aided art are unsatisfactory and pupils, although experienced and capable in word processing and Internet research, are unable to explore the exciting field of digital manipulation and animation.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Since the previous inspection, standards have improved in Year 9.
- Teaching and learning have improved and are good overall.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Accommodation is poor.
- Information and communication technology is an area for development.

Commentary

115. Pupils, including those with SEN, attain standards that are below average in Year 9, but this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Lesson observations show that standards are continuing to improve because of good teaching. This represents good achievement. This year was the first for many years with entries for GCSE music. Numbers were too low to compare results with national figures. However, the school was pleased that all pupils attained grades expected of them.

116. Teachers are experienced and work with pace, enthusiasm and good humour to promote improving standards of learning. However, there are significant gaps in pupils' knowledge in Year 9. For example, their limited knowledge and understanding of the elements and weak keyboard skills are having a negative impact on standards of composition and performance. Collaborative group work is a key feature of lessons. Teachers' expectations are appropriate, tasks are well suited to pupils' learning styles and most pupils work well. For example, in a Year 9 lesson pupils worked in small groups on a task that challenged them to produce an interesting piece using a restricted number of notes. Listening skills are improving but are held back because of pupils' limited knowledge and experience in identifying and using the elements of music. Positive and supportive assessment identifies key points for improvement.

117. About seven per cent of pupils learn a wide range of instruments through the music support service. The school builds on this by providing a good range of extra-curricular activities including the school choir, musical drama productions, musical evenings and after-school clubs.

118. The head of department has been in post for one year. The department is well organised. The new development plan has identified the areas that need improvement. Schemes of work are newly revised and relate closely to the National Curriculum. Most pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and benefit from the orderly and well-structured approach the department provides for them.

119. Accommodation is poor. There are no purpose-built practice rooms and pupils are unable to refine their work because of the amount of unnecessary noise in practical sessions. Resources are unsatisfactory overall because access to computers in lessons is very limited. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Physical education

The overall quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well to reach the expected standard for their age.
- Pupils' attainment at GCSE is below average, as is the attainment of pupils in Year 11.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and very good relationships with their teachers.
- The facilities are insufficient and of poor quality.

Commentary

120. Pupils have different experiences before joining the school but most have below average standards in either games or movement skills. By the end of Year 9, pupils attain average standards in most activities and their achievement is good. Pupils have the added benefit of participating in dance lessons and this helps to raise their overall confidence in movement activities. They build their knowledge of health and fitness. Pupils improve their level of performance in games activities because teaching focuses well on helping them to develop skills, for example in football. The analytical skills of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not as well developed as their performance skills; this strand of the National Curriculum is not emphasised or promoted enough in lessons.

121. Pupils in Year 11 attain standards that are below those expected for their age and their achievement is unsatisfactory in core physical education lessons. They lack quality in their dance movements and their footwork and ball handling skills in netball are inconsistent. Indications are that GCSE results in 2003 are likely to be well below average and continue a falling trend. Present GCSE pupils in Year 10 are producing good quality written work, and their competent practical expertise indicates standards and achievement that are at least average.

122. Pupils' overall good achievement in Years 7 to 9 is directly attributable to good teaching and their positive attitudes and very good relationships with teachers. Pupils are enthusiastic and interested in the limited number of extra activities provided in the department. Their involvement in these activities, some of which are taught by outside coaches, helps to raise standards and provides good opportunities for talented pupils. However, the school does not have a minibus or the funding to allow pupils to travel to away fixtures. This limits the participation of pupils in extra-curricular sport.

123. Teaching is good overall although less consistent in Years 10 and 11. In the majority of lessons teachers circulate well, extending the more able and helping pupils who find the activity difficult. This is a positive strategy that promotes all pupils' learning and helps pupils with SEN to achieve as well as others. Where teaching is less effective there is a lack of balance between teaching performance skills and giving pupils independent tasks that encourage their planning, observational and evaluative skills.

124. The curriculum leader leads and manages the department satisfactorily. The recent improvements in leadership and teaching within the department deserve particular credit, given the difficulties caused by the lack of specialist staff and good quality facilities in previous years.

125. Means for recording the assessment of pupils' progress are also being developed but are not yet related to the different activities covered or shared with the pupils. Schemes and units of work do not identify specific tasks to help pupils gain confidence and independence in analysing and evaluating their work and that of others. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection and the curriculum programme is now better suited to the needs and interests of the pupils. However, the programme for Year 10 does not give enough time to study the GCSE examination and it is important that this is reviewed in relation to option choices and curriculum

planning. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because there is only one specialist indoor area, the school hall has to be used for dance, part of the changing area needs refurbishment, and the fields quickly become waterlogged.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Overall provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Outside speakers and visits make a good contribution to pupils' understanding.
- Pupils recognise citizenship as a separate subject in all years.
- The curriculum leader does not have a clear picture of how citizenship is being taught.
- The assessment systems in place are underdeveloped.

Commentary

126. Citizenship lessons take place weekly for all pupils in Years 7 to 9. Single lessons are supplemented with contributions from other subjects, visits and visitors to the school. Citizenship includes pupils' personal, social and health education. Examples seen include *The Rights of the Child* in Year 7 and *Crime and Punishment*, which is delivered in conjunction with religious education in Year 9. In one Year 7 lesson seen there was not enough time for reflection or discussion. However, there is evidence in the books of pupils in Years 7 to 9 to suggest that they are given opportunities for expressing their own thoughts. In Year 10 the subject is delivered within the GCSE short course in religious education. In Year 11 there is an informal approach to citizenship as a subject. Most subjects have identified aspects that are being covered but there has not been a full audit in Years 10 and 11 to identify gaps in the curriculum. In lessons and work seen pupils achieve a satisfactory understanding of the topics they discuss. They are developing a better sense of responsibility towards themselves and others through their participation in school and community activities. Their knowledge and understanding of government, law and economics are below average.

127. Teaching and learning in lessons is satisfactory overall with some good features. Although most teachers assess pupils' work in lessons, there are no systems in place that give the department an overview of standards and achievement in the subject. Most teachers identify citizenship aims in lessons; in Year 10, however; they are not always identified in pupils' books.

128. The school prepared for the introduction of citizenship in Years 7 to 9 by checking which subjects delivered elements of the course. In Year 10 religious education makes a good contribution towards the delivery of the subject. The school has plans to check the contributions from subject areas in Year 11. Outside speakers enrich the provision in Years 10 and 11. In addition some opportunities exist for pupils to assist in the community, for example through work experience and visits to the local magistrates' court.

129. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Departmental planning lacks detail, staff training has not taken place and there is little support for those teachers who lack confidence or expertise in delivering some areas of the subject. No monitoring has been carried out to ensure that all the elements of the course have been covered, or to evaluate the quality of the teaching and learning.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE POST 16 CENTRE

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, with 4 or more students on the course

Level 3 GCE AS Level courses (England refers to girls taking AS in Yr 12)

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English Literature	15	100	82.3	46.7	35.9	43.3	38.16
Media Studies	12	100	94.1	50	35.7	45.8	38.41
ICT	6	83.3	85.2	33.3	35.5	31.7	35.1
Art and Design	6	83.3	90.9	33.3	43.1	35	39.31
Biology	4	100	82.3	25	35.7	37.5	34.11
Business studies	9	77.8	87.8	33.3	29.2	33.3	34.19
Chemistry	4	75	85.7	0	40.6	22.5	36.57
Drama	5	100		80		46	
History	5	100	92.2	100	39.7	56	38.63
Photography	7	85.7		57		45	
Psychology	15	46.7	82.9	14	30.8	15.3	32.81
Religious Studies	8	100	91.7	25	42.7	36.25	39.25
Sociology	13	76.9	83.6	31	32.9	30.8	34

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
Health and Social Care VCE	16	62.5	90.3	0	16.7	31.2	62.9
Art and Design	4	100	96.7	75.0	52.3	110.0	87.8
Biology	14	100	92.6	28.5	38.7	72.9	76.3
Business Studies	8	100	96.8	12.5	35.9	70.0	78.4
Chemistry	7	100	95.1	28.6	49.2	74.3	83.8
Media (Communication) Studies	8	100	98.7	62.5	40.5	90	83.3
English literature	12	100	98.7	50.0	44.1	91.7	84.7
Information Technology	8	100	91.9	25.0	23.4	72.5	66.6
History	4	100	97.1	0.0	41.0	50.0	83.3
Psychology	8	100	95.2	0	41.6	70.0	79.9
Sociology	12	100	95.8	50.0	41.4	91.7	80.4

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is very **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Results at A2 Level in 2002 were above average.
- Teaching is very good and sets high academic standards.
- Recruitment has increased significantly and the retention rate is high.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

AS Level results in 2002 and 2003 were above average with a large proportion of students achieving the highest grades. Results at A2 Level in 2002 were above average for girls nationally and well above for all students. Every student gained a pass grade and the percentage achieving higher grades was above average

130. The standard of current work seen is above average. Students in Year 12 have adjusted well to the increased rigour of the A Level course. They speak with evident enjoyment of the new challenge and are making good progress with their study of a complex contemporary novel. Students make well-informed, mature and perceptive comments. In large classes, however, not all students make regular and substantial oral contributions. Note taking is thorough and students use a wide range of sources to broaden the background of their knowledge. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based upon their GCSE results. A wide range of levels of attainment is represented but most students are working with enthusiasm and commitment. In their study of the literature of the First World War, students show rapidly developing knowledge of the background to the war and the social and political implications illustrated in the literature. Written work is well presented and thoroughly prepared. Some high attaining students are already writing essays of a high standard.

131. Teaching is very good and the enthusiasm of almost all students reflects this as do the rapidly improving examination results. High academic standards are expected. A range of teaching methods is used but students' spoken responses are not as forthcoming in some lessons as they are in the main school. Relationships are very positive and students appreciate being treated as young adults whose views and opinions are always respected. Work is thoroughly assessed and carefully marked, with some extensive analysis and comment.

132. The upward trend in standards at GCSE and recently at AS and A2 Level have resulted in a significant rise in the number opting for the subject. Very good teaching in the main school and very effective leadership and management have encouraged students in their choice.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

133. Although the major recent initiative in developing literacy across the curriculum has been concentrated in Years 7 to 9, its influence has permeated the whole school. Speaking and listening skills have been the main focus and standards have been improved in many departments. When given the opportunity, most students are confident and articulate. Workshops have been arranged by the English department for a few post-16 students who lack confidence. A study skills afternoon in information and communication technology, note taking, essay writing and presentation skills was also held to support the literacy needs of sixth form students. In Year 12, students in ICT benefit from concentration upon accurate use of technical vocabulary and the need for clear, simple language.

Spanish

Provision in Spanish is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Consistently very good teaching encourages independent learning.
- Lessons are very well structured and use a wide range of resources.
- Standards in written and spoken language are above average.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Some students do not have a sufficient grasp of more complex grammar points.

Commentary

134. Standards of students' work in Spanish are generally above average. The most recent results at AS Level reflect this, though based upon a very small number of candidates. In lessons, students have well-developed skills in listening and reading comprehension and have little difficulty in coping with spoken text at near native speed. Most students speak with confidence and usually fluently and accurately. All students have a solid grasp of basic grammar structures but there is some variability in their application of more complex tenses and constructions. They have a good foundation of vocabulary and are able to apply this knowledge to deduce meaning. Written Spanish is usually accurate and at this stage of the course students are beginning to show creativity and breadth of language in their work. Students achieve well in Spanish and this is evident in the good progress that they are making in coping with more difficult texts and in the development of their oral confidence. Abler students in particular show above average fluency and very good pronunciation in spoken Spanish.

135. The notable progress that students are making is in no small measure due to very good teaching. Outstanding subject knowledge, very structured lesson planning using a wide range of resources, and exclusive use of Spanish for classroom instruction all contribute to this high quality teaching. Consequently students have confidence in their progress and are encouraged to undertake independent research on the Internet and to take responsibility for their own learning. The combination of very good teaching and a strong commitment by students results in very good progress in lessons. Students are encouraged to express themselves, correct their own work and broaden their linguistic and cultural knowledge.

136. The post-16 programme for Spanish is set out in a detailed scheme of work. The foreign languages curriculum leader gives very strong direction to the development of Spanish in the sixth form.

137. Since the previous inspection, results in Spanish have shown steady improvement, though with small numbers of students studying this subject. Every effort is being made to encourage more students to take up Spanish in the sixth form.

MATHEMATICS

The provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching is very good in both the AS and A2 Level courses.
- Plans are in place to encourage more students to study for AS and A level, and to raise standards.
- In 2003, AS Level examination results were below average.

- Too few students choose to study mathematics beyond AS Level.

Commentary

138. In previous years too few students were entered for AS and A Level examinations for comparisons to be made with national averages. In 2003 there were no A Level and twelve AS Level candidates, some of whom did not achieve their target grades and chose not to continue studying mathematics. The current group of five Year 13 students and the larger group of Year 12 students are attaining at least average standards.

139. Both groups in Year 12 are studying the 'decision' and 'pure mathematics' modules. The standard of work seen in their lessons is good. In academic discussions students demonstrate an increasing familiarity with the language of mathematics and high level thinking skills, which will enable them to cope with abstract mathematics. They are achieving well in both modules. Year 12 students are expected to attain good AS Level grades in 2004 and then to continue studying mathematics to A Level. Year 13 students are on track to achieve their target grades of B to D.

140. The standard of teaching and the relationship between teachers and students are very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable. They share their love of mathematics with the students and they elicit the students' logical thought processes. They provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively and to develop independent study skills to prepare them for higher education. Teachers inform students of their present standards of attainment and help them to set targets so that they remain mindful of the need to work hard.

141. The curriculum leader works closely with the other teachers of AS/A Level mathematics and is tracking the progress of the students to ensure that they are well prepared to secure good grades next year. The very good teaching and management of the subject in the sixth form are raising standards. Planning for the future development of the AS and A Level courses has been carefully considered. The curriculum leader and the team of talented and dedicated teachers are now in a good position to develop mathematics in the sixth form, bring about an increase in the A and AS Level student numbers and improve standards of attainment.

Mathematics across the curriculum

142. Currently there is no programme for teaching mathematical skills to students in other areas of study. However, plans are in place to develop these key skills in the sixth form. Basic numeracy skills are timetabled for students with SEN in the sixth form.

SCIENCE

The focus subject was chemistry. One lesson was observed in each of physics and biology where teaching and learning were very good.

Chemistry

The quality of provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of teaching and learning are good.
- Students achieve well.
- Assessment procedures are well developed.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Use of ICT is underdeveloped.

Commentary

143. A Level results have fluctuated between average in 1999, above average in 2000, and below average in 2001 and 2002. In 2002, for which comparative information is available, the students performed as well in chemistry as they did in their other subjects. In 2003, there was only one student so no comparisons can be made. AS Level results in 2003 were below average. Current standards in Year 13 are broadly average and students are achieving well. They have good investigative skills. However, their ICT skills are not developed as well as expected. Year 12 students make satisfactory transition from GCSE work, increasing their knowledge and understanding of basic chemistry.

144. The quality of teaching and learning is good and makes an effective contribution to students' achievement. Lessons are planned thoughtfully. Teachers provide a good range of practical activities which help students to develop good investigative skills. Students work with a high level of motivation, work out necessary calculations accurately, and present their work carefully. Skilful use of questioning by teachers clarifies and enhances students' knowledge and understanding. Good quality assessment focuses on what the students need to do to improve students' performance. There is insufficient focus on the use of ICT in lessons.

145. The leadership of the subject is good. It is enthusiastic, committed and collaborative. Management is good. Assessment and monitoring are well developed. There is good teamwork, for example sharing of ideas and good practice.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The range of courses offered meets the needs of all students.
- Increased numbers show that the subject is popular with students.
- New leadership and management have introduced measures to raise standards.

Commentary

146. Examination results in 2002 were above average overall and the number of students obtaining the higher grades was broadly in line with the national average. There was a drop in the results in 2003, with the performance of the more able students below average.

147. Students use appropriate software confidently to create invoices for a business. They understand the need to write appropriate user guides but are less secure about the contents of different types of guides. Detailed notes supported by other resources extend their understanding of the principles in using ICT in business. However, there are not sufficient opportunities to apply that understanding in a range of business applications. Practical work is detailed but students' skill and knowledge are not as well developed as in students of a similar age. They create databases but are not confident in identifying different data types nor experienced in successfully searching the data.

148. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good planning ensures that all lessons are productive. Teachers use computer slide presentations as an aid to learning but do not always choose the most relevant slides and this confuses students. In some lessons too much emphasis is placed on the theory of a topic and students do not have sufficient time to apply the theory in a practical context. Teachers provide individual support and ask searching questions which focus students' attention onto the most important points of the topic. Good homework activities develop what students have learned in a lesson.

149. The newly appointed director of communications technology has clear ideas for the further development of ICT in the sixth form. She has the vision to establish suitable policies and implement effective strategies.

150. In Year 13 three teachers share a class which makes it difficult to maintain consistency and co-ordination. This may be a contributory factor in explaining why students show a lack of urgency to complete home and coursework.

151. The subject has become popular with an increasing number of students. Teaching and learning are now more stabilised, but higher attaining students are still not fully extended.

Information and communications technology across the curriculum

152. Students are beginning to use ICT well to support their learning and the presentation of their work in their areas of study

HUMANITIES

One lesson in sociology and two lessons in psychology were observed; teaching and learning were at least good. A good geography lesson and a very good history lesson were also observed.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

One lesson in design and technology was observed; teaching and learning were satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subject was media studies. One art lesson was observed; teaching and learning were very good.

Media studies

The provision for media studies is very **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The above average standards achieved by students.
- High quality teaching in the subject.
- The imaginative interpretation of the A Level media studies syllabus.
- Not all students make a full and active contribution to lessons.

Commentary

153. Students achieve above average standards with well over half of them gaining the highest grades. This means that they do very well especially as they have not studied this subject prior to them entering the sixth form. The high standards are seen in the scrutiny of students' written and practical work and also confirmed in the most recent A Level results in 2003.

154. Students in both Years 12 and 13 display satisfactory analytical skills as they use their knowledge of cinematic conventions when exploring 'film noir' and the American cinema of the forties and fifties and contemporary action and adventure films. They also have a sound understanding of public service broadcasting and the production of news programmes. They develop satisfactory technical and production skills, with higher attaining students putting together

good quality projects on the creation of newspaper supplements, advertisements and leaflets on health issues, and advertisements and video packaging for students' own imagined films.

155. Students receive high quality teaching. Lessons are well planned and organised. Teachers use resources in a very effective manner to promote learning, skills and knowledge. Lessons are brisk and purposeful with a good balance between practical activities and academic study. Students are given the chance to take control of their own learning through well-planned group activities. Not all students make full and active contributions to lessons. Consequently they do not develop the ability to make a personal response to the activities they are involved in and the examination questions they will be asked. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge; their good relationship with their students makes a valuable contribution to learning.

156. Leadership and management in the subject are good. The A Level syllabus is interpreted in an imaginative and challenging manner, and satisfactory assessment procedures enable teachers and students to identify progress and attainment in the subject. The strength of the subject and the commitment to raising standards is reflected in the school's application for Media Arts status and its recognition by the Local Educational Authority (LEA) as a centre of good practice in the subject.

157. So few students were involved in the subject at the time of the last inspection that it is not possible to make a meaningful judgement about improvement in standards.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

One lesson in **physical education** was observed; teaching and learning were good.

BUSINESS

One lesson in **business studies** was observed; teaching and learning were satisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good leadership and management lead to good achievement by students.
- Students have sound attitudes and contribute well in class discussions.
- Students with SEN are well supported.
- Independent learning skills are not well developed.
- The use of experience in the community to promote learning is under-developed.

Commentary

158. The school offers health and social care general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) at foundation and intermediate level. The advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) is also offered. All these courses were inspected.

159. Examination results for the A Level vocational course in 2002 were very low when compared with all schools and with girls nationally. Students did not achieve grades in the A/B range. Analysis of results shows that the majority of students achieved as expected in view of their very low prior attainment. A small group of students entered for A Level in 2003. The percentage pass

rate was higher than in the previous year and represents good achievement for these students. Results for intermediate GNVQ show that the majority of students achieved above expectation based on prior attainment.

160. Standards on the current A Level course are average and the number of students is higher than previously. Achievement is good. Students in Year 13 are able to evaluate their own communication skills very well. They display good skills in classroom discussions in which students of all abilities are willing participants. Students taking foundation level are good at identifying factors that affect the health and well being of individuals. Students at all levels make good use of ICT to enhance their work. They generally show good research and analytical skills and make good use of case studies. They take account of good feedback from teachers to improve their work. Students with SEN are very well supported by teachers and others and this enables them to achieve above expectation. Students have sufficiently well developed literacy and numeracy skills to cope with their course. A few students need to make better use of witness statements when gathering evidence to improve their work. Independent learning skills are not generally well developed and students rely heavily on input from teachers to guide their work.

161. Teaching is good. A team of teachers with different subject specialisms is well deployed so that students benefit from their varying expertise. Students make rapid gains in acquiring knowledge and understanding. Lessons are made interesting because they contain a range of activities that result in good learning. Students respond well to what is offered but most of them are over-reliant on teachers to direct the work rather than showing initiative themselves. Currently students do not have sufficient opportunity to experience health and social care in the community and this is a barrier to learning. Assessment is good and students receive good feedback on their work and what needs to improve. The majority of students act on the advice given by teachers and this leads to good achievement.

162. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The curriculum co-ordinator has a clear vision for the subject. The courses are well planned, routinely reviewed and meet the needs of students' future career aspirations. Timetabling difficulties and low numbers taking GNVQ foundation level have resulted in a combined group with intermediate level students. This is not generally considered good practice because it affects standards. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No lessons were observed.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Post 16 grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the Post 16 and the school	3	2
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the Post 16 / value for money provided by the school	3	2
Overall standards achieved		2
Students' achievement	3	1
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	3	2
How well students learn	3	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	1	1
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
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	5
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7). 0 indicates insufficient evidence to make judgements at this stage in Post 16.