

INSPECTION REPORT

COX GREEN SCHOOL

Maidenhead

LEA area: Windsor and Maidenhead

Unique reference number: 110067

Headteacher: Mr Ian Hylan

Lead inspector: Dr David Benstock

Dates of inspection: 3rd - 6th November 2003

Inspection number: 261816

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 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	988
School address:	Highfield Lane Maidenhead
Postcode:	SL6 3AX
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Chris Tyers
Date of previous inspection:	27 th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Cox Green School is an 11 - 18 mixed comprehensive school, and is about average size with a growing Sixth Form. It is situated in the town of Maidenhead and serves the local area of the town and the nearby villages. The socio-economic background reflects the circumstances of families often having above average experience of higher education and experiencing little social deprivation. The great majority of pupils have white British heritage. The number of students with English as an additional language is low. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, and the number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. Pupil mobility last year was relatively small, with few pupils moving in or out at other than the usual time. The rapidly expanding Sixth Form has some classes that are shared with four other schools, forming a small consortium. The school has been awarded Beacon status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3958	Maureen Cawdron	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.
27226	Richard Cribb	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical Education; Citizenship.
22780	David Custance	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.
15407	Muriel Harrison	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.
31705	John Mason	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.
2494	Michael Newton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious Education; Special Educational Needs.
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24887	Yvonne Salmons	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern Foreign Language; English as an additional language.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Cox Green is a satisfactory school and has a good Sixth Form. It gives satisfactory value for money. The overall quality of education is satisfactory. Standards of work are broadly average. Achievement is satisfactory in the main school and good in the Sixth Form. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school offers a satisfactory curriculum and good provision for care. The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' achievement in Year 7 to 9, which was once good, is now satisfactory. Standards of attainment in Year 9, particularly in English, have declined in the last few years, but now there are signs of improvement.
- A minority of pupils show lack of respect for education and there is inconsistent application of the whole school policy on behaviour and attitudes by some faculties.
- The school cares well for its pupils, is highly inclusive and provides well for pupils with specific learning needs, disabilities, and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Overall, the vision and sense of purpose of the headteacher are good.
- There is inconsistency in the monitoring of teaching and learning, use of assessment data and curricular planning between faculties. This undermines the whole school approach to raising achievement.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good.
- Provision for music and extra-curricular activities in the arts is good.
- Accommodation is cramped in some areas and particularly affects the facilities for independent study by Sixth Form students.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) resources are not shared widely enough between faculties to ensure that pupils have maximum access and opportunity to develop skills in the whole range of subjects.

Since the last inspection attainment at the end of Year 9 has fallen. The decline has been mainly in English. The percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A* - C grades in GCSE has fallen slightly over the period. Sixth Form standards are improving. The key issues in the last inspection related to raising achievement in ICT, religious education and the Sixth Form. Standards, and provision for ICT, have improved, but further development is needed. Sixth Form standards are improving well. Religious education provision is currently unsatisfactory. Whole school development planning has shown very good improvement and is clearly costed. Greater opportunities have been provided for staff to have continuous professional development. Overall improvement has been satisfactory and good in the Sixth Form.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: Grades based on average point score: 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 achieve satisfactorily from their entry to the school in Year 7 through to the end of Year 11, and achieve well in the Sixth Form. Standards of work seen are average at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. They are broadly average in the Sixth Form. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN), and those with English as an additional language (EAL), achieve well.

A small but significant minority of pupils have attitudes that are unsatisfactory in some lessons and affect achievement of others. They show lack of respect for education, each other and property. Inconsistencies in the management of classroom behaviour of pupils in different faculties lead to variations in the extent of the problem. Attendance and punctuality, however, are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall throughout the school. Assessment procedures are generally satisfactory but variations are found in the use of the data. The curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and good in the Sixth Form. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in mathematics and for the Sixth Form. There are good procedures for care, support and guidance. Links with parents and other schools are very good and links with the community are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is good, and that of other key staff including heads of faculty is satisfactory overall. However, there are differences of approach and support for whole school initiatives. The effectiveness of management is satisfactory. Governance is unsatisfactory because the governors do not ensure that statutory requirements are met by provision of a daily act of collective worship and teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the Sixth Form.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall, parents are satisfied with the school. Pupils generally enjoy being at the school but some express concern over the behaviour of a minority of pupils in classes.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Establish a whole school approach to the management of attitudes to learning and behaviour of a minority of pupils in some classes.
- Raise standards in English and overall achievement at the end of Year 9.
- Achieve greater consistency between faculties in the monitoring of teaching and learning, and use of assessment.
- Share ICT resources more effectively.
- Improve the quality of accommodation, which is often cramped.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide religious education for Years 10 and 11.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Sixth Form is good and it is cost effective. Until this year numbers of students in the Sixth Form have been low. The significant increase in numbers this year demonstrates confidence in the Sixth Form, which is now part of the Maidenhead Consortium and able to offer an extended range of subjects. Being part of a consortium means that students are encouraged to stay on into the Sixth Form as there is a greater chance that the subjects they require will be available. Whilst the examination results are only just above national averages they have shown significant improvement over the last three years and represent good progress by the students since they entered the Sixth Form. The Sixth Form now has a sound base from which to improve further.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A wide range of courses is available, including minority subjects through the consortium.
- Very good advice and guidance are available.
- There has been good achievement from Year 11.
- Very good analysis and monitoring of student performance, which demonstrates how well students' achievement relative to their entry level has improved in recent years.
- The accommodation and resources for both study and social interaction are inadequate for the increased student numbers.

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 satisfactory . Recruitment of students is good and results have improved at AS Level. Standards at A2 Level are, however, below average.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is satisfactory . Mathematics in the Sixth Form is increasing in popularity; teachers encourage students to understand the subject by effective use of their good subject knowledge.
Science	Provision in biology is good . There is a high level of commitment by both students and staff to achieve above average standards. There are high standards of presentation and use of information technology.
Information and Communication Technology	Provision in ICT is good . Standards are below average but teaching is good, and students achieve well in lessons. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Humanities	Provision in history is good . Teaching is good and enables students to make good gains in their learning.
Other subjects in the school were sampled including psychology, music, Spanish, sociology, chemistry, physics, design and technology, art, German, French and physical education. Teaching and learning in all these lessons was at least satisfactory and mainly good or very good.	

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

Care and support for students are good. The smaller size of the Sixth Form means that the aims and needs of all students are well known and ensures that they receive good advice and guidance. Mentoring sessions now take place termly as a result of student consultation and students feel this has resulted in a better quality service. Students' progress is monitored well and they value the advice they receive on their academic performance and what they have to do to meet their targets. Although direct guidance from staff is good, the effectiveness of this is limited because of the restricted follow-up facilities available to students. There are not enough facilities for private study for the increased number of students, and too few opportunities to use ICT and the Internet for those who wish to carry out research but are not studying ICT.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management in the Sixth Form are **good**. The head of Sixth Form leads a team of seven tutors and liaises with faculty heads on curriculum issues. His management, together with that of the leadership team, has increased opportunities for students and resulted in the increased numbers joining the Sixth Form. Management of these increased numbers has been good. However, if the increased popularity of the Sixth Form is to be maintained, the school needs to provide a better and more accessible Sixth Form study centre as well as improved social areas.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students interviewed during the inspection were generally supportive of the Sixth Form, but the questionnaire results showed significant disagreements. Many of the students' concerns relate to the increased numbers joining the Sixth Form, which have resulted in inadequate social and study facilities. There is significant concern about advice and guidance during the past year on career options. This is now considered satisfactory but students' concerns clearly reflect the need for improved facilities to follow up the advice being given within the school. There were concerns about advice on subject choices, partly because the increased number of available subjects means that students have not been able to talk to previous students, and partly because the content of courses is not the same as in previous years. Significant concern was expressed about the ICT course, which had been disrupted through staff absence.

WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS TO DO TO IMPROVE

The most important things the Sixth Form should do to improve are:

- Improve the accommodation and resources to meet the needs of the rapidly growing numbers of students.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide religious education for the Sixth Form.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, standards of attainment are broadly average and achievement of pupils is satisfactory. Achievement in the Sixth Form is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are in line with the national average at the end of Year 9 and achievement from Year 7 is satisfactory.
- Attainment in the National Curriculum tests in the core subjects has declined over the past four years, but mainly due to performance in English.
- The percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more grades A*-C in GCSE examinations has fallen over the last four years.
- The overall total point score per pupil in GCSE examinations improved slightly year by year since the last inspection up to 2002 and although lower in 2003 was still above national average.
- Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.
- Achievement of pupils with SEN is good.
- In music, standards are above average and achievement is very good.
- Achievement in the Sixth Form is good.

Commentary

1. In the National Curriculum tests in 2003, the performance of pupils in mathematics and English was broadly in line with the national average. It was above average in science. The proportion of pupils gaining target Level 5 or higher was well below average compared with schools from a similar context based on eligibility for free school meals. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average and overall progress from entry to the end of Year 9 is satisfactory.

2. There has been an overall decline in attainment in the tests relative to the national average since the last inspection, with the trend being below the national trend. In 1999 the average point score was 3.2 points above national and in 2002 it has fallen to be 1.1 points above. However, results have fluctuated greatly in English, with a big decline from 1999 to 2001. In 2002, the average point score of pupils rose slightly. Statistically, the overall performance in core subjects in 2002 was above national average and well above average compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils with the same range of attainment on entry in Year 7. Up to 2000 performance was well above average. In 2003 the points score based on school data not yet validated against national standards is lower than in 2002, and the difference in the provisional average point score of pupils and the national average is less than in 2002.

3. Girls did better than boys overall in core subjects in 2002, and also in English in 2003. Performance in mathematics and science is broadly similar for boys and girls in 2003. In 2003 the school did not reach its targets for the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or higher.

4. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A* - C was above average. The overall performance, measured by the average point score, was also above average. For this cohort of pupils, this represents satisfactory progress from their attainment in Year 9. The results in 2002 were a little higher; attainment was above average in that year. In the previous two years, however, results were well above average. Overall, there has thus

been a fall in the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A* - C. Girls attained higher grades overall than boys, although the reverse was the case in ICT. The best results in 2003 were in French, art and design, business studies, design and technology and English; the weakest were in physical education, ICT and German.

5. In both Years 9 and 11, standards seen during the inspection, in lesson observation and in pupils' written work, were broadly average overall, reflecting the performance in most recent tests and examinations. Achievement from entry to the school to the end of Year 9, and again in Years 10 and 11, has been generally satisfactory. However, the evidence indicates improvement and that pupils are achieving better now as a result of the impact of new leadership and more secure staffing and teaching. Many new initiatives in developing teaching styles and using performance data are having a positive effect on the motivation of pupils. There is no evidence in the work seen of any significant difference in the standards of boys and girls, reflecting the success of school initiatives to correct previous variations.

6. In Year 9, standards are broadly average but above average in design and technology, history, geography and music. They are below average in English and modern languages, particularly French and German. In Year 11, standards are well above average in art and design, above average in design and technology and geography, and below average in ICT. Achievement is unsatisfactory in English and modern foreign languages from Year 7 to Year 9, and in ICT in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is good in English in Year 10 and 11, as a result of better teaching and use of assessment. It is good in design and technology, geography, history, art and design and music.

7. Pupils with EAL achieve well and make good progress. Minority ethnic pupils achieve as well as other pupils in the school, and are well supported by the school's comprehensive racial equality policy.

8. Pupils with SEN achieve well, and better than most other pupils, because of the good quality of support that they receive in the classroom. Progress assistants give very good support to individuals and groups of pupils and overall teachers provide a good level of support to these pupils.

9. Although there is formal identification of gifted and talented pupils by the school, many teachers are not clearly aware of those pupils involved. Teachers are aware of those of higher ability and provide appropriate extension work that enables them to achieve well. This is particularly evident in humanities subjects and physical education.

Sixth Form

10. In 2002, the overall average point score was broadly in line with the national average and girls did better than boys. In the previous year standards were relatively lower, below the national average. This represents an upward trend in performance in the Sixth Form and good improvement. In 2003, many more students are entered for AS and A2 examinations and results represent a further improvement on previous years.

11. In the work seen in Year 12, mainly in the five focus subjects, standards are above average in English literature, average in mathematics and biology and below average in ICT and history. In Year 13, standards are relatively lower, but the achievement of both year groups from their entry into the Sixth Form has been good. There is no observed difference in the performance of boys and girls, but the majority of students studying ICT are boys and the majority studying biology are girls.

12. Two statemented SEN students achieved above expectations in the 2003 GCSE examinations as a result of the high quality support they received throughout the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.3 (33.8)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	36.0 (36.6)	34.7 (34.4)
science	34.3 (35.5)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 166 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003 and 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (59)	53 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	89 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	95 (96)
Average point score per pupil	42.9(45.0)	N/A (39.8)

There were 158 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2002.

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

	School results	National results
Average point score per student	227.6 (175.3)	263.3

There were 42 students entered in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

13. Attendance levels and punctuality throughout the school day are very good. Whilst relationships are generally good throughout the school, attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils in the main school are unsatisfactory. They are good in the Sixth Form. The number of fixed term exclusions is low and there have been no permanent exclusions. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good attendance and punctuality make an important contribution to students' learning
- Attitudes and behaviour in the Sixth Form are good.
- The school provides good opportunities to exercise responsibility.
- In some classes a minority of pupils demonstrate unacceptable behaviour and attitudes, which affect the learning of others.
- Whilst some teachers have very good classroom management skills the school policy is not uniformly applied and best practice is insufficiently shared. Behaviour issues appear to be associated with particular subjects and not individual teachers.
- Opportunities for spiritual reflection are not taken frequently enough in assemblies and in many lessons.

Commentary

Main School

14. Most students have very good attendance records, and punctuality is very good both at the start of the day and for lessons; the 5 minute period between lessons helps here. The school enforces a strict policy of not authorising absence for extended family holidays and encourages parents to support the very good attendance. Whilst the school does not contact parents on the first day of absence, it does follow up all absences and involves the external services if necessary.

15. Behaviour around the school is generally good. Students are polite and friendly and relationships are good. There are, however, a number of lessons where behaviour and attitudes are unsatisfactory. In some lessons there is general background chatter and interruption of lessons by students calling out is frequent. In a few lessons some students are determined to challenge the teacher's classroom management skills. This has been a particular issue with supply teachers and the school has now adopted a policy of 'over staffing' to provide cover by existing teachers. Where poor behaviour occurs it has a detrimental effect on others. During the inspection poor behaviour affected learning in mathematics, English, science, and information technology. Whilst not all lessons within these subjects were affected, the issues tended to be associated with subjects rather than particular teachers. Years 8, 9 and 10 were the most challenging year groups. The school has good policies on behaviour management, with appropriate sanctions and rewards, but these are not uniformly applied. Bullying within the school does occur, but infrequently; when it is identified, it is dealt with quickly and well.

16. Pupils with EAL have good attitudes to learning and are well integrated into the school community.

17. Generally the school's very good provision helps to ensure that SEN pupils integrate and develop well. However, SEN pupils who have emotional and behavioural problems display challenging behaviour in lessons. Where such pupils are grouped together in lower sets and the management of their behaviour is unsatisfactory, learning is unsatisfactory.

18. Overall the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a sound level of awareness of spiritual issues. There is a satisfactory respect for the views of others, and the small minority of pupils from other cultures are generally well integrated and respected in the school. Assemblies, although they are worthwhile occasions, do not constitute acts of corporate worship. The governors' policy on worship, which seeks to meet legal requirements through, for example, a tutorial focus on a 'Thought for the Week', is not being used consistently to help to meet these requirements. The lack of opportunity for reflection in assemblies and religious education lessons, as well as in other subjects, limits pupils' level of spiritual and self awareness.

19. To develop their social skills, pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to exercise some of the responsibilities of living in a community. These opportunities include the School Council, the Year 7 team-building day and a variety of visits to places of educational interest. However, the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of pupils shows that they do not apply their understanding of these responsibilities.

20. The school provides pupils with many opportunities to understand their own cultural traditions. These include dance evenings, musical productions, visiting artists and visits to places such as the Globe Theatre. There are some opportunities for pupils to understand the traditions and beliefs of other cultures represented in Britain and the wider world. For example, the school has links with schools in Africa and there is a vibrant display of Native American art in the library. However, opportunities are missed to widen this understanding in several areas of the school's curriculum.

Sixth Form

21. 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 good attitudes to learning; they have formed good relationships with each other and with staff. Many take on responsibilities such as the Sixth Form council or specific roles as head boy and head girl. Although there are very few enrichment activities timetabled many Sixth Form students do get directly involved supporting students in the lower school during the day.

22. There is no provision for religious studies in the Sixth Form curriculum and this limits students' spiritual development. They do however have a sensitivity to the needs of others, as was seen in the presentation a group of students gave to lower school assemblies on a visit made to support children in Ecuador. Other students develop a good level of self-awareness through other forms of support, such as the peer reading scheme.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.1	School data	1.7
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.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White - British
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
773	12	0
145	17	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but there are inconsistencies in the extent to which assessment is used. Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching and learning in music, and in physical education in Years 7 - 9, are very good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise.
- In English and mathematics especially the overall management of behaviour is unsatisfactory; this affects the quality of learning in some classes.
- There is inconsistency in the use of assessment between departments.
- The lack of access to ICT limits teaching opportunities.

Main school

23. In a significant number of subjects the quality of teaching and learning, and the achievement of pupils, is good. During the inspection virtually all lessons were at least satisfactory and over half were good.

24. Teachers demonstrate a good command of their subjects and plan their lessons carefully to ensure that work is matched to the needs of pupils. Resources are well used to stimulate the interest of most pupils. Great care is taken to include and support all pupils. In the majority of lessons pupils learn well, acquiring knowledge and understanding of basic ideas.

25. In a significant minority of lessons, evidence from observation, and scrutiny of written work, indicates that pupils are not sufficiently engaged. In some, teachers are unable to sustain interest owing to the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils. This weakness in behaviour management is

apparent in a number of subjects, English and mathematics in particular. In some subjects, especially design and technology, music, physical education and geography, behaviour is well managed and all pupils are able to make uninterrupted progress.

26. The quality of teaching is very good overall in music and in physical education in Years 7 to 9. In these subjects the variety of teaching methods, level of challenge, pace and extent of planning are often excellent.

27. The provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory since the curriculum does not satisfy the requirement of the Agreed Syllabus, but even in Years 7 - 9 teachers are non-specialists and often their command of the subject is inadequate to ensure good learning. In modern languages also, there is insufficient challenge in Years 7 to 9, especially to raise the standards of higher attaining pupils.

28. Subjects where there is a consistency of good style, challenge, pace and management of behaviour include geography, music, design and technology, and physical education.

29. Teaching and learning in English and mathematics are satisfactory, although in both subjects teachers' knowledge and competence in the subject are good. There is a lack of variety of technique, sometimes a lack of challenge, missed opportunity to use homework to promote independent learning and unsatisfactory management of behaviour, so that learning is barely satisfactory. The quality of teaching in English is better in Years 10 and 11, compared with that for younger pupils.

30. Assessment overall is satisfactory. Teachers use secure procedures to identify progress made by pupils and compare it with targets based on prior attainment. The use of assessment is inconsistent, with varieties of grading and little reference to expectations based on national averages. The use of very detailed data produced by the senior leadership team is inconsistent between faculties.

31. In music, assessment is well established and utilised very well. It is thoroughly embedded in the work of teachers in history and geography. Assessment is unsatisfactory in citizenship and, except for those studying philosophy and ethics GCSE, non-existent in religious education in Years 10 and 11. There is little use of assessment in art and design in Years 7 to 9.

32. There is generally a good level of awareness among teachers of the needs of SEN pupils and good efforts are made to support them. The learning support department provides a helpful advice sheet on possible strategies to be used with pupils who have individual education plans (IEPs) and these are used well. In lessons where progress assistants are available there is a good working relationship between them and the teacher, which benefits not only specific SEN pupils but other pupils as well. In some faculty areas, such as the humanities and design and technology, the needs of both SEN and gifted and talented pupils are well provided for in the work set but this is not consistent across all subjects. The one-to-one teaching provided by progress assistants to enhance learning for some SEN pupils is very good.

Sixth Form

33. Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form are good overall. In the focus subjects, teaching is good in ICT, history and biology; it is satisfactory in English and mathematics. Evidence from sampled subjects, however, indicates that teaching is good generally and leads to good achievement.

34. Assessment in the Sixth Form is good, and good use is made of predictions based on national performance data. Senior staff carry out extensive analysis of data to identify under-performance, although there is inconsistency in use of the data between departments.

35. Resources are used well in the Sixth Form, especially ICT, to develop independent learning. However, the availability of opportunities to develop key skills in numeracy is insufficient. Relationships are good, so that good levels of discussion are undertaken and students show a high level of commitment.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 140 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4(3%)	26(19%)	58(41%)	48(34%)	4(3%)	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.

Year 7 - Exemplary practice in English

This mixed ability class wait with some excitement before the lesson begins. They are clearly used to challenges and surprises from their teacher. The lesson aims to introduce pupils to the skill of giving presentations, and the teacher, mysteriously referring to a large cardboard box on her desk, explains she will be giving a short presentation herself, and will then ask pupils to assess in national curriculum terms how well she has done. The criteria, suitably adapted to make understanding easier, are distributed. The teacher brings out from the box various objects connected with bee keeping: protective clothing, gloves ... even a honeycomb; the talk starts. The pupils watch and listen, fascinated, but critical at the same time; they refer seriously to the criteria in front of them. When it is over, they discuss first in pairs and then as a whole class, when the teacher questions them closely about the reasons for their judgement. There is a general consensus that the talk should be given a Level 6 - the teacher accepts this, confessing nevertheless her disappointment at not being awarded the highest level.

Throughout the lesson the teacher uses humour to maintain good relations and to promote learning. Her strong classroom skills are seen in the way she forces the pace, ensures that all pupils answer questions, and elicits appropriate responses from pupils from a wide ability range. Pupils with special needs contribute enthusiastically. Very strict timing means that pupils work quickly during writing tasks and their concentration is sustained. By the end of the lesson they are able to show very good understanding of what makes a successful presentation, and they leave brimming with ideas for their own performances the next lesson.

Year 10 Exemplary practice in music.

In a GCSE class on music from Indonesia, developing concentration, respect and creativity.

Although the school does not have a set of Indonesian gamelan instruments, the traditions of Indonesian gamelan music suffuse the lesson from the start. In traditional style pupils happily take off their shoes, carefully pick up a range of glockenspiels and set up crash cymbals in lieu of more authentic instruments, sitting crossed-legged in front of them and resisting the temptation to practice any individual parts with the beaters. Vocal warm-ups familiarise the pupils with the five notes from which their piece is drawn and help them to focus aurally on the different pitches. When playing the kaleidoscopically repeating patterns, pupils' concentration on their role in the whole musical concept is total, adapting subtly to changes of pattern and tempo initiated from the skilled drumming of the teacher. In later small group work in which pupils develop their own gamelan pieces, a pupil observed to be at loggerheads with his form teacher an hour earlier, is working - as all others in the group - with complete commitment, concentration, respect and creativity.

The curriculum

The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides satisfactorily for the needs of pupils in the school. In the Sixth Form, the curriculum is good as there is a wide range of courses from which to choose.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school does not ensure that religious education is taught in Years 10 and 11 or the Sixth Form to comply with statutory requirements.
- There is a good range of courses including vocational studies, and diverse choice in design and technology in Years 10 and 11.
- There are good opportunities for enrichment activities, often reflecting a degree of innovation, for example, music therapy and emotional intelligence development.
- There is good provision for pupils with SEN.
- There is a shortage of accommodation, including facilities for the Sixth Form.
- The access to ICT resources for some subjects is insufficient although it is good for others.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

36. The curriculum is broad and offers a range of opportunities, especially in Years 10 and 11. It is enhanced by the inclusion of additional subjects such as drama in all years, and enrichment activities, especially in the arts. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and the school has a very clear, strong policy of inclusion. There is good provision for pupils with physical disabilities.

37. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good, and a detailed programme of activities and topics is implemented. This programme supplements the good provision for citizenship in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11.

38. Careers education is satisfactory although a number of students in the Sixth Form feel they are inadequately prepared for option choices, Sixth Form studies and higher education. All pupils have the opportunity of work experience and approximately one tenth of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to take advantage of the 14 - 19 Vocational Curriculum, spending time out of school, partly on work experience and partly at a local college of education

39. Many teachers provide additional opportunities to give extra guidance and support to pupils. Additional lessons are prepared outside normal school time to help with public examination revision.

40. Accommodation overall is satisfactory, but a number of areas, for example teaching rooms for mathematics and the library, are too small and limit opportunities for learning. Access to ICT resources is a problem for some faculties. Resources are unsatisfactory in religious education

41. With the exception of religious education, citizenship and physical education there is a good match of teaching staff to the curriculum provided. Teaching is enriched by good deployment, which allows teachers to focus on their own specialist interests. Religious education and citizenship, however, are taught by non-specialists, which may affect the status of these subjects for pupils. There is no qualified teacher of religious education on the staff. All teachers of modern languages are qualified in two languages, but there are no assistants to support language teaching.

42. The school provides a good programme of extra-curricular and enrichment experiences for its pupils, raising their self-esteem and developing their personal qualities. The activities in music are excellent with a range of high quality vocal and instrumental ensembles, including excellent jazz and concert bands, which frequently perform in the wider community and for charitable causes. Twice the usual proportion of pupils take instrumental lessons. Most subjects offer helpful homework clubs and other support, although attendance at these is variable. Information and communication technology (ICT) facilities and support are available in all breaks. There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of team sports, as well as to develop individual sporting interests and for senior pupils to develop leadership skills. Many departments organise trips to museums, theatres and places of interest, including regular visits to Germany in languages and music. Annual productions are a showcase for arts provision, engaging a large number of pupils.

43. Provision for SEN pupils is very good. There is a high level of in-class support by progress assistants who also provide very good additional one-to-one support when individual pupils are withdrawn from those few lessons thought to be inappropriate for them. Statemented pupils and those designated as School Action Plus on the SEN register have a key worker who monitors their progress in relation to their IEP. Some pupils follow a spelling programme in English and sixth-formers help pupils with their reading. A daily homework support club is run at lunchtime. A music therapy class has been established for those who show high levels of disaffection with school. There is appropriate adjustment of the curriculum in Key Stage 3 where additional lessons in literacy are provided for some pupils instead of a second modern language. In Years 10 and 11 there is an alternative option for pupils with SEN, particularly those with learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems. This latter course is supported by the Prince's Trust. There is no specific learning resource base for SEN pupils although there is access to the ICT network, which carries a number of helpful programs.

Sixth Form

44. The curriculum provision in the Sixth Form is good. There is a wide range of courses, supplemented by an opportunity to select one option from a consortium arrangement with other schools. Good provision is made for guidance and support for students. There is no planned enrichment programme for the Sixth Form, but many sixth-formers participate in whole-school activities.

45. As in the main school, teachers are aware of the needs of SEN students and take appropriate steps to support them. Two statemented students speak highly of the support they have received and are currently receiving. In both cases their results in GCSE examinations were above expectations and they attribute this to the support of both progress assistants and teachers.

46. The limitations on accommodation have a particular impact on the Sixth Form as this has grown so quickly in the last year. Similar problems arise with adequacy of resources, for example in A Level biology. Staff are well matched to the requirements of Sixth Form teaching. In all the focus subjects learning was enhanced by teachers' ability to communicate their own particular interest and knowledge in their subject.

Care, guidance and support

The procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **good**. Support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development, are **good**. The extent to which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school places good emphasis on child protection and health and safety issues.
- Year heads and other staff work closely to provide pupils with good academic and personal support.
- Pupils with SEN and those with physical needs are supported very well.
- An effective school council involves pupils in making decisions.
- Induction for new pupils, including those who arrive during the school year, is good.
- Assessment information available is not yet fully used in target setting for pupils.
- The full child protection policy is still to be approved by the school's committee for human relations.
- Contact with parents is not made as soon as a pupil's absence is discovered.

Commentary

47. The school is fully aware of its responsibilities to ensure the health and safety of pupils, and teachers and progress assistants have been given appropriate training in child protection issues. Procedures for child protection are good and very good liaison with other child protection agencies ensures their effectiveness. The school policy is in draft form and awaiting approval by the school's human relations committee. Electronic registration provides good information on attendance but parents are not always contacted as soon as an absence is discovered. This makes it difficult to ensure the welfare of absent pupils. First aid arrangements are well established and were seen to work effectively during the inspection. Appropriate safety checks are made and records kept.

48. Induction arrangements enable pupils to settle into school life well and pupils spoke well of team building exercises they took part in on induction day. Recent improvements have provided closer links between the academic and pastoral systems and have enabled heads of year and form tutors to provide more cohesive support for pupils. Pupil targets are based on information from both pastoral and academic areas and are monitored through pupil planners. The school is aware, however, that assessment information could be used to greater effect when advising pupils how to improve their academic performance. A recent successful trial to involve parents of Year 7 pupils in the mentoring process is to be evaluated and extended to other year groups.

49. There are good primary school links that help identify and support SEN pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and head of year spend time in primary school helping to ensure good transition. The personal as well as academic needs of SEN pupils are fully addressed. The school successfully supports some extreme cases of special need and physical disability and as a result provides good access to the curriculum for all. All statemented and School Action Plus SEN pupils have a key worker with whom they develop a good relationship. This progress assistant reviews the IEP and targets on a regular basis and with the help of the SENCO ensures that appropriate information and guidance is available to other staff.

50. Facilities for the needs of pupils with physical disabilities have been improved and tested for suitability. This, together with the good arrangements for the care and support of pupils with SEN, is an indication of the school's strong commitment to inclusion. No pupils are excluded from participation in all aspects of school life.

51. Pupils interviewed during the inspection were in general agreement that the school valued them as individuals and listened to their views, and that the school council played an effective part in this. Most pupils felt that they would be able to approach at least one member of staff if they experienced either personal or academic problems.

52. The care provided by the school continues to be good and improvements have been made since the last inspection.

Sixth Form

Support and guidance available to students in the Sixth Form are **good**. Students' views are valued and their involvement in school life is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Mentoring procedures have recently been amended as a result of consultation with students.
- Induction arrangements for students are good.
- Students are fully involved in the school council.
- A significant number of students feel that advice they received before they started in the Sixth Form, and the information on opportunities after completing Sixth Form courses, was not helpful.

Commentary

53. Recent discussions with students revealed that they would prefer fewer consultations during the school year but thought that consultations should be longer. The school has acted to amend the mentoring schedule to accommodate these views. Mentoring sessions now take place termly and students feel that this has resulted in better quality advice. Students' progress is monitored well and they value the advice they receive on their academic performance and what they have to do to meet their targets. Student questionnaires, however, revealed that a significant number felt that advice on choice of Sixth Form courses was not helpful and that advice available on future career paths was not detailed enough.

54. Students are fully involved in the life of the school and share responsibilities for younger pupils. The head boy and head girl act as good role models in chairing the school council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents and with other schools and colleges, which ensure a smooth transition for students. Links with the community are good in the main school but only satisfactory in the Sixth Form.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Parents have a high opinion of the school and there is clearly a very good partnership.
- The school provides very good information for parents, and the open door policy ensures that any concerns they have can be dealt with.
- Induction and preparation for students joining the school is very good.
- Community links are being developed further as part of the preparation for specialist school status.
- Methods to consult parents and respond to their views are not sufficiently developed.

Main School

55. Parents are very supportive of the school and consider that there is a good partnership with them. However, some parents are concerned about the level of information they receive about their children's progress, the school not seeking their views and acting on them, the range of extra-curricular activities, and the behaviour of pupils.

56. The information provided for parents is very good. School reports are comprehensive and informative. Consultation evenings are well attended, as parents are clearly interested in their child's education. To improve the information the school has recently revised the report format and has also invited some parents into school for student/tutor reviews. Parents are kept informed of school events through well-presented regular newsletters and the school web site. Parents have been directly consulted on certain issues such as the revised policy for SEN. The school's open door policy, supported by efficient and friendly office staff, enables any concerns to be sorted out quickly.

57. Links with other educational establishments are very good. Liaison with primary schools is strong and well established; all future pupils are visited at their primary school, and have opportunities to visit the school as well. There are many links through departments in the strong primary-secondary partnership. In the upper school links have been established with local colleges to provide more vocational courses. There are strong links with the nearby special school with which there have been regular student transfers. Cox Green School is 'well thought of' by the other schools.

58. Links with the community are good. Students benefit from visits from the police and prison service as part of the citizenship course and from school trips and activities in the community. Links are currently being further developed, including closer links with the nearby community centre, as part of the preparation for the specialist school status which the school hopes to obtain.

Sixth Form

59. Parents' views are generally the same as for the main school but there are specific concerns about the lack of space and facilities for private study. Links with other schools are well established and consortium arrangements provide additional subject choices.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management is satisfactory, and good in the Sixth Form. Leadership of the headteacher is good. Management is satisfactory in the main school and good in the Sixth Form. Governance of the school is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The headteacher has a clear vision and high aspirations for the school.
- The leadership team have a clear commitment to inclusion within the school.
- There is a very good induction programme for new teachers.
- Governors have not ensured that the school provides a daily act of collective worship.
- Governors have not ensured that the statutory requirements for the provision of religious education are satisfied.
- Governors are not yet fully involved with the running of the school.

Main School

60. The headteacher, who was appointed approximately two years ago, has rebuilt the leadership team; it is now forward and outward looking. The deputy headteachers are establishing their roles throughout the school. Overall leadership within departments is satisfactory but consistent application of policies across departments has not yet been established. Heads of year now have an increased role following restructuring. After being virtually non-existent two years ago, planning for strategic development is now good. There is a strong commitment to the inclusive nature of the school.

61. The school's self-evaluation procedures are good. Review groups involving a range of staff are able to form a fair opinion and also contribute to staff development. When staff join the school there is a very good induction process and they are given a comprehensive staff handbook containing essential policies and useful information. Continued staff development within the school is good; one excellent feature is that all teachers get the opportunity to go into another school to see how it works. The monitoring of performance data by the leadership team is good, but within departments there is a wide variation in practice.

62. Management of SEN is good with strong involvement of departments. The SENCO manages the support structures well with regular meetings with department representatives, progress assistants and pastoral staff. On a day-to-day basis routines are well supported by good secretarial provision. The school invests heavily in SEN with an above average amount of finance allocated to supporting staff and pupils. Although the SENCO has no specialist qualifications all but the most

recently appointed progress assistants have attended an induction course and most have had additional training. Governor involvement in SEN is satisfactory. Staff are not fully aware of the specific English learning needs of pupils who have EAL. A comprehensive policy is not in place.

63. The school's staff performance and induction procedures are good. There are strong links with Reading University for the training of new teachers. Staff new to the school, as well as newly qualified teachers, receive good support, which continues well into their first year of service. Full implementation of the staff development policy, including non-teaching staff, has taken place since the last report, co-ordinated by one of the assistant head teachers working with the staff development group. INSET training is well geared to the needs of individuals and the school development plan. Joint training days are held with local schools and help to cement links. Particularly beneficial outcomes have been seen in the music faculty and in modern language teaching, where there was good attendance for Spanish in-service training. All staff are monitored regularly and targets for future performance are identified. Targets are continually reviewed, though more fine-tuning of procedures needs to be introduced for senior management to be fully effective. The school has recently had its Investors in People status renewed.

64. The present governing body is developing its role and is informed and consulted. Governors do provide challenge and considerable support to the senior management team. However, they are not as fully involved in the strategic planning for the school as they should be. Although the governors receive information about departments there are not direct governor-department links and governors do not take part in the appointment of any member of staff below senior leadership team status. The supportive work done by the governing body is satisfactory. Governance of the school, however, is unsatisfactory because it does not meet the statutory requirements in respect of a daily act of collective worship and the provision of religious education.

65. The prospective bid for specialist school status, for the performing arts, has the strong backing of the governors and senior staff as well as pupils. Pupils are knowledgeable and excited about the bid and recognise the benefits it will bring. The preparation and planning stages are being led by an experienced team of staff who share a good understanding of the time-scales involved and the implications for staffing. There are secure management plans and structures in place to tackle areas of relative weaknesses, like ICT in art and drama, and to ensure that the strengths in dance and the excellent provision in music continue to flourish.

66. Procedures for financial management are good. There is a full-time finance manager on the leadership team, who closely monitors all expenditure. The development plans are drawn up in great detail and are fully costed against the priorities. The principles of best value are adhered to in all matters. The most recent audit report revealed no issues.

Sixth Form

67. The leadership and management in the Sixth Form are good. The head of Sixth Form is an established and well-recognised position within the school and management structures ensure good communications both with the leadership team and with departments. The seven tutors support the day-to-day management of the Sixth Form well. Monitoring of students' performance is very good using data provided through external agencies, and this data is well used in forward planning.

68. The school's staff development programme ensures that staff are able to attend INSET training relevant to their Sixth Form teaching. Financial planning is undertaken alongside the main school and although there is a slight subsidy from the main school to the Sixth Form, it remains satisfactorily cost effective.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,045,703.00
Total expenditure	3,015,537.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,314.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	2,671.00
Balance carried forward to the next	32,837.00

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils' achievement at the end of Year 11 is good, because of thorough teaching and sound assessment practices.
- The downward trend in test results at the end of Year 9 reflects unsatisfactory achievement.
- Poor attitudes and behaviour in Years 8 and 9 are barriers to achievement.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress.
- Some more able pupils are underachieving as a result of low expectations by their teachers.

Commentary

69. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average. Results at the end of Year 9 have been falling since 1999 and in 2003 were well below those for similar schools. This represents unsatisfactory achievement for most pupils, as they enter the school with standards in English that are slightly above average. Girls do better than boys. Pupils often speak confidently but rarely at length and their listening skills are weak. Reading comprehension is satisfactory, but there are few opportunities to develop the skill of reading aloud. While there is some good imaginative writing, there is a lack of closely argued analytical work from more able pupils. Too many of those in lower sets write with little regard for punctuation or good presentation.

70. Pupils' lack of achievement is chiefly the result of poor attitudes and behaviour in Years 8 and 9. Despite the efforts of teachers, there is frequently no learning ethos, and a great deal of unnecessary noise and silliness. Many pupils, especially boys, are reluctant to engage with work in class, and their learning suffers. Ideas are not developed in depth, as serious question and answer sessions cannot always be sustained. Frequently the homework set does not make sufficient demands of more able pupils.

71. In contrast, standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average overall. Recent results in GCSE English language were well above average, with girls performing better than boys, while results in GCSE English literature were broadly average, with less of a gap between boys' and girls' performance. Pupils are achieving well, having begun their GCSE courses with average attainment. They make use of literary techniques studied to create atmosphere in their own writing, for example, and those in top sets show developing analytical skills. Weaker pupils lack technical control, and are reluctant to expand their ideas. Pupils with SEN achieve well, helped by teachers' inclusive approach, well structured work and good support.

72. Good achievement in Years 10 and 11 stems from thorough teaching, detailed marking and sound assessment practices. Pupils have a more serious approach to learning. Some of the measures introduced by the department to raise the attainment of boys are beginning to take effect.

73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Planning and use of resources are good. Assessment is used well. However, learning is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because there is insufficient expectation by teachers of standards that reflect pupils' capabilities, limited use of homework and a lack of insistence on good behaviour in the lessons. In the most successful lesson observed, with a Year 7 mixed ability group, the teacher's enthusiasm, brisk pace and imaginative

teaching methods resulted in very good learning. Pupils' interest was sustained and they worked hard producing their own ideas. Older pupils appreciate the helpful, detailed marking they receive. Most teachers plan well, but not all provide enough time to conclude lessons effectively so that pupils reflect and evaluate their learning.

74. Leadership and management of the faculty are satisfactory. Effective teamwork has resulted in the conscientious revision of curriculum plans in response to national initiatives. Monitoring needs strengthening so that good classroom practice is shared.

75. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Teachers now use a wider range of strategies, and policies are implemented consistently. Higher attaining pupils still need more challenge, while restricted access to ICT facilities means that teachers cannot put their curriculum plans for the development of ICT into effect.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

76. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Attentive listening and confident speaking are the main strengths. Standards of discussion are good in geography and ICT, but weaker in art and English. In all subjects, pupils' reading skills, including those of information retrieval, are sufficient to cope with the demands of the curriculum. Most write fluently and accurately, occasionally at length, but the presentation of weaker pupils is poor.

77. Most but not all departments take the development of literacy into account in their planning. Teachers usually encourage the acquisition of subject-specific vocabulary. The teaching of writing skills is good in geography, physical education and citizenship because teachers encourage pupils to write at length in different styles, but such opportunities are rare in art and music. Many teachers are rigorous in their marking of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Provision for teaching literacy is satisfactory, but it is not co-ordinated well enough across the curriculum and the school policy now needs updating.

Modern Foreign Languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- GCSE standards in French and Spanish are above average, but those in German are below.
- The department's strong commitment to ICT enables pupils to make good progress in reading and writing in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to Spanish.
- Pupils make insufficient progress in Years 7 - 9 due to lack of pace and challenge in lessons.
- Teachers do not use the foreign language consistently in lessons. This contributes to pupils' lack of confidence in speaking.
- Schemes of work for Years 7 - 9 require revision, to ensure that all pupils achieve well.
- Excellent course materials produced by teachers support pupils well in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

78. In 2002 and 2003, standards in Year 9 teacher assessments were in line with expectations. GCSE results in 2002 and 2003 were above average overall: above average in French, well above average in Spanish and below average in German. The school enters pupils of a wider ability range in German than is the case nationally. This contributes to the lower A* - C percentage as compared with national averages. In French and Spanish girls performed better than boys in 2003. In German, the reverse was true and the results of the girls were very poor.

79. In the current Year 9, standards are below expectations overall and achievement is unsatisfactory. In Year 11, standards are average overall, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Speaking skills are weak in all years; pupils lack confidence in phrasing natural language, and in French, pupils speak with poor accents. In spite of their very good subject knowledge, teachers do not use the target language consistently in lessons, and consequently in all three languages pupils make slow progress in listening and speaking, especially in Years 7 - 9. The lack of modern foreign languages assistants also limits pupils' speaking development. Pupils make insufficient progress in writing in Years 7 - 9. They are too dependent on worksheets, and do not develop personal self-expression; however, writing develops well in Years 10 and 11 due to teachers' increased emphasis on extended writing, accuracy of grammar, and the excellent GCSE resources they provide. Pupils consolidate reading and writing effectively, and develop independent learning skills very well through variable language programs using ICT. However, in Years 7 - 9, the language levels are often limited to the unchallenging content which schemes of work determine for all three languages, and many, especially the abler pupils, do not make sufficient progress. Boys particularly enjoy using ICT but often lack concentration in other lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall, and very good in Spanish.

80. The department is inclusive, providing well for pupils with SEN, pupils with EAL and the highest attaining pupils; all these pupils achieve well.

81. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although half of the lessons seen were at least good and one excellent ICT-based lesson was seen. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and produce some excellent resources to support learning. Marking is regular, and careful assessment records are kept, but learning is not routinely linked to National Curriculum Levels; consequently, pupils do not have clear awareness of their progress. There is insufficient use of the target language in lessons and a lack of challenge especially for higher attainers in Years 7 - 9. Opportunities to develop speaking skills are limited.

82. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The head of department's leadership of the Lyondell Centre and meticulous organisation of departmental routines effectively support a committed and well-qualified team. However, teaching is insufficiently monitored; and schemes of work, policies and departmental planning require revising and linking to ensure faster progress in Years 7 - 9. Since the last inspection there has been limited improvement in use of the target language, an issue at that time.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Results in external examinations are above average, but there has been a decline in recent years.
- There is a cohesive, mutually supportive team of teachers, whose subject knowledge is very good.
- Limitations of space in some classrooms restrict teaching and lesson structure.
- Lack of modern computers within the department restricts their use in lessons.

Commentary

83. Standards of pupils upon entry to the school are broadly in line with the national average. In the 2002 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 the results were above average for all schools indicating that pupils have achieved well. This was, however, a slight decline from the previous year and the 2003 results indicate that this decline is continuing. There is a similar pattern in GCSE results where the 2002 results were above average but the 2003 results indicate a drop. The examination results show that girls achieve better than boys do but this is not apparent in lessons. Results are slightly better than in science but not quite as good as in English. The decline in the last year may be due to the difficulties in staffing that resulted in several temporary teachers being used. This has been resolved and the department is now fully staffed with suitably qualified teachers.

84. The standards seen during the inspection reflect those found in the most recent tests and examinations. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average and achievement from Year 7 to year 9 has been satisfactory. Pupils in the higher sets in Year 9 confidently work with problems involving Pythagoras' Rule. Lower sets are numerate and can manipulate simple equations and draw straight-line graphs. Standards in Year 11 are above average and achievement is good from Year 10 to Year 11. Pupils with SEN achieve as well as other pupils owing to good support in lessons.

85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the main school with some good features. Teachers follow the guidance of the numeracy strategy well and are supported by a comprehensive scheme of work. Most teaching is too routinely focussed on exposition followed by practice with a brief summary at the end. Learning would be improved by using shorter bursts of teaching to sustain pace and enthusiasm. Insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance learning, which was also the case at the last inspection. Some classrooms are too small and pupils do not have sufficient space to work comfortably, which leads to occasions where behaviour is unsatisfactory. Poor behaviour and attitudes of pupils resulted in two lessons during the inspection being unsatisfactory, as teachers had to spend more time controlling behaviour than teaching.

86. The better lessons are in classrooms that have adequate space where resources can be used effectively. This enables lessons to proceed at a good pace with material that stimulates and engages pupils. For example, a practical lesson with Year 7 involved pupils working in groups to collect practical results for statistical analysis. Pupils' enthusiasm was high and discussions within the groups covered a range of possible extensions to their work. The high levels of interest and enthusiasm encouraged good behaviour. Good support is given to pupils with SEN. Teachers mark work thoroughly but do not share National Curriculum Levels with pupils. Regular assessments monitor progress but are not analysed in order to seek improvements to teaching.

87. Leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory. The head of department has successfully built a cohesive, mutually supportive team that is focussed on raising achievement. Teachers share good practice but these ideas have not yet been translated into the scheme of work to provide good and permanent guidance for the future. The head of department does monitor teaching and learning. This has led to some improvements but observations are infrequent owing to constraints of the timetable.

Mathematics across the curriculum

88. The national numeracy strategy is embedded within mathematics lessons, but few departments have planned the development of numeracy in their subject. Pupils' skills are sufficient for them to access the curriculum. There is no whole school policy for numeracy and there is no overall co-ordination of mathematics across the curriculum. There is good practice in science where charts, graphs and diagrams are effectively used. In geography too, there is good use of data handling skills as pupils analyse information after displaying it in different and relevant ways.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The faculty is committed to raising standards.
- Teachers are well deployed to make best use of their specialist knowledge.
- A performance tracking system is being effectively used to raise standards.
- Behaviour management of a minority of pupils is poor.
- Girls' standards of attainment at GCSE are better than boys'.
- The structure of lessons does not leave enough time for good consolidation at the end.
- Too many classes have to be taught outside the science block.

Commentary

89. Standards at the end of Years 9 are in line with national averages. In 2003, Year 9 pupils made satisfactory progress overall from Year 7 but there was a significant increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades. Year 7 pupils respond well to the enthusiasm of their teachers. They have good scientific vocabulary. Good planning enabled one Year 9 class to consolidate their understanding of forces by constructing web diagrams. Pupils understand how to use units of force and can do simple numerical calculations to work out pressure in relation to force and area. However, middle and lower ability pupils have difficulty in remembering facts. The results of the 2003 GCSE dual award examination show that standards were average. Boys' performance was significantly lower than that of girls. In the work seen in class standards reflect those in the examinations. Achievement is satisfactory.

90. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. Learning is occasionally affected by poor behaviour. Good marking with helpful commentary by teachers ensures that notebooks are a valuable source for revision, and written work, particularly that of girls, is well presented. Homework is used well. Good planning and observational skills are developed, but more needs to be done to strengthen pupils' analytical and evaluative skills. Very good support was given to two special needs pupils in helping them to set up an experiment to investigate reflection. This allowed both pupils to achieve well in the lesson, where otherwise they would have floundered.

91. Apart from Year 7, the three sciences are taught largely by specialists who communicate their enthusiasm and can answer pupils' questions fully. Pupils respond and learn well when stimulated,

particularly in lessons where they are engaged in a variety of activities. They work well in groups and when they understand the teacher's expectations. A Year 7 class discussing reasons why the earth is round and not flat showed good achievement in being able to organise their ideas and then communicate them to the rest of the class. Most pupils have pride in their work, but when it comes to knowing what to do to raise their level of attainment, they lack the subject specific information.

92. Teachers do not always leave enough time at the end of lessons for a proper summary and assessment of pupils' understanding, though homework is used well to consolidate and build on what is done in class. While ICT is used well for coursework, there is little evidence of its use elsewhere. The faculty is about to be equipped with laptops, which, with the existing data-logging equipment, should ensure that ICT becomes part of regular class work.

93. The head of faculty co-ordinates and monitors performance satisfactorily. There are good opportunities for in-service training. There is a good system for assembling assessment data, and this has already been used to good effect in raising standards at the end of Year 9. More, however, needs to be done to analyse pupils' performance in Years 10 and 11 and take remedial action to raise standards, particularly in the case of boys. The introduction of the new modular GCSE course should help to raise pupils' interest. The structure of the curriculum can lead to lack of accommodation at certain times, which means that some classes have to be taught outside the science block. This raises safety and educational issues for practical work being attempted in non-science classrooms. Good links with primary schools through the faculty's Beacon work should help to ensure that pupils do not repeat work and move on fast. The department is well served by a dedicated team of technicians.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

- Resources for ICT have improved considerably since the previous inspection.
- Very good technical support has a positive effect on teaching and learning.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11 give pupils better opportunities to develop skills in ICT.
- Staffing difficulties have meant a lack of continuity in the teaching of ICT and the leadership and management of the ICT department.
- Assessment data is not used to set individual targets for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to improve.
- Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

94. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicate that pupils' attainments are above national averages for ICT. In work seen during the inspection, standards in ICT in Years 7 to 9 are average. In 2002 the GCSE information technology results were well below national averages. 2003 results are similarly well below average. Girls did better than boys, in line with the national trend.

95. Pupils in Year 7 enter the school with average attainment in ICT. By Year 9, their attainment in ICT is average, so their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 11 have skills in ICT that are below average and their level of achievement is overall unsatisfactory.

96. By the end of Year 9 pupils use word processing, desk top publishing and multi-media software packages to present work, databases and spreadsheets to process information, and are confident users of the Internet to research topics. They have experience in using computers to simulate and control situations. Higher attaining pupils have a clear understanding of how to apply

different packages to different situations. Lower attaining pupils display good technical skills but do not always complete their work thoroughly. In most lessons pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment, including those with SEN, make at least satisfactory progress as they learn new skills and reinforce existing ones.

97. By the end of Year 11 pupils studying a full GCSE course are competent users of word-processing, desk top publishing, spreadsheet, and multi-media software packages. Higher attaining pupils are able to explain the development of their work in detail. Lower attaining pupils produce printouts that require good technical skills but their work is often incomplete and lacks explanation. For the majority of pupils studying a half GCSE course, standards are below average. These pupils have experience of using a variety of software packages but show limited levels of skill and expertise.

98. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory. Good lessons are well structured and use a wide range of activities that capture pupils' interest. The pace of learning is brisk, and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. In these lessons pupils' attitudes to the subject are positive, relationships are very good, and pupils collaborate well with one another. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, in which pupils were producing a booklet for children, a wide variety of learning activities resulted in good learning. Pupils researched the content of the book on the Internet, downloaded information and used desk top publishing packages to produce their books. They successfully evaluated their own and other pupils' work using assessment grids.

99. However, in some lessons there are shortcomings. Planning does not take full account of pupils' interests, so that the work fails to motivate all pupils. There is a lack of variety and pace, so that a few pupils become restless, lose concentration and their progress is slow.

100. In Years 7 to 9 feedback to pupils on how to improve their work is given during lessons, but pupils are unaware of the National Curriculum Levels at which they are working, and they do not know what needs to be done to get to the next level. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are set individual targets and are clear about what they must do to improve.

101. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staffing difficulties involving long-term illness and the recruitment of temporary teachers have resulted in a lack of continuity in teaching, and in leadership and management. This lack of continuity has had an adverse effect on the learning and achievement of pupils. The head of department has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards of teaching and learning, and to raise the attainment of pupils. He is working with members of the department to share good practice and to develop better systems of assessment and target setting for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

102. There is excellent technical support for pupils and staff, given by the systems manager and the technician. This gives confidence to staff and pupils in using ICT, and assists in raising standards. The accommodation and resources are good. There are good opportunities for pupils to use the ICT facilities for extra-curricular activities at lunch time and after school.

103. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Introduction of ICT lessons for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 has ensured that pupils are receiving their ICT entitlement. Further investment in computers, electronic whiteboards and additional software has improved the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum.

The use of ICT skills across the curriculum

104. The planned programme for using ICT in other subjects has improved significantly since the last inspection. The recently appointed systems manager works closely with the headteacher and heads of department to identify priorities to improve the use of ICT across all subject areas. Effective use is made of computers in history, geography and music, and the excellent use of ICT to support teaching and learning in modern foreign languages has received national recognition.

Several subjects encourage pupils to use word processing and desktop publishing to present work, and the Internet to research projects. In addition, computer aided design enhances learning in design and technology, and data logging is used effectively in science. However, although the resources have improved they remain insufficient to ensure that all subjects have easy access to facilities. There is insufficient use of ICT in English, art and drama.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Overall the provision for geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Marking of pupils' work and the procedures for assessment are good and provide encouragement for pupils to do well.
- Teaching is good overall, which leads to good progress.
- There is good use of enquiry projects to develop pupils' independent learning skills.
- Resources to suit pupils' learning needs are underdeveloped.
- Documentation to ensure good planning for pupils' progress and the teaching of key skills is lacking in detail.

Commentary

105. Pupils' attainment is average on entry to the school and above average by the end of Year 9. This is good achievement. All pupils develop good map and graph skills. Higher attaining pupils produce very good enquiry projects with detailed extended writing, but weak literacy limits the writing skills of lower attainers. Numeracy is satisfactory overall and good for higher attainers.

106. GCSE examination results were well above average in 2002 but they were lower in 2003. In work seen, standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Higher attaining pupils write well, show good understanding and use geographical terms well. They have very good numeracy and analytical skills, which are well used for examination fieldwork. Pupils with SEN make good progress and complete their work, but other low attainers often produce incomplete work. For all low attainers, written work lacks detail and the use of evidence in examination fieldwork is limited. Their numeracy and graph skills are satisfactory. For all pupils there is good achievement as their progress in Years 7 to 9 is sustained.

107. Teaching is good overall. All teachers have high expectations and question pupils skilfully to ensure that they are able to contribute to their own understanding. In the best lessons, teaching is creative using a variety of activities and resources. In these lessons pupils develop skills, use varying methods of recording, and produce some good extended writing. In a minority of lessons, teachers explain too much or allow activities to go on too long, which leads to loss of lesson pace and pupil motivation. Materials are often insufficient to suit the needs of all pupils. This leads to uncompleted work and loss of pupils' concentration and interest. In other lessons teaching inspires interest. For example, pupils in Year 7 practise field sketching in the school grounds. They are first daunted by the challenge and then fascinated as they begin to understand and develop the skill required. However, low attainers need a basic outline to aid their learning.

108. Leadership of the department is good and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved, extended writing is more common and the use of enquiry projects is helping to develop independent learning skills. Pupils with special needs now make good progress. However, fieldwork for Years 7 to 9 remains inadequate and schemes of work need revision and completion.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching.
- Strategies to ensure good behaviour and attitudes are successful; pupils behave well and enjoy their history lessons.
- Boys do better in history than is the case nationally. This is because of effective teaching.
- There is scope for more marking based on GCSE criteria in Years 10 and 11, particularly on source analysis, so that pupils are clearer about what exactly they need to do in order to improve.
- Rooms are in poor physical condition, which means that teachers have to struggle to make them visually stimulating.

Commentary

109. GCSE results were broadly average in 2002 and those for 2003 show a continuation of this trend, although results were just below average overall. Boys, however, achieved results much closer to the national average than girls.

110. When pupils enter the school, standards are broadly average. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9, representing good achievement for all pupils. Pupils write well, with increasing confidence. Pupils with SEN achieve well. By the end of Year 11, pupils opting to take history at GCSE achieve broadly average standards, representing good achievement given prior attainment. This applies to pupils throughout the ability range and also to pupils from ethnic minorities. In order to raise standards further, the department should review its strategies for teaching pupils to analyse historical sources.

111. Teaching and learning are good overall, although slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. A particular strength of the department is the way in which teachers have established clear behavioural and work-related expectations. As a result, pupils work hard, behave well and show considerable pride in their achievements. Another strength is the way in which the teaching enables boys to achieve better in relative terms than the national trend. The pace of learning is always brisk and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. Teachers make good use of questions to engage pupils' interest and also to check and reinforce their understanding. As a consequence, pupils make rapid gains in their understanding and also develop an enthusiasm for the subject. This was evident, for example, in a Year 7 lesson where pupils looked at a range of evidence such as coins, films and buildings in order to make conclusions about how historians use such evidence to tell them about what kind of people the Romans were. As a result pupils were motivated, keen to participate and ready to be stretched. Learning is enhanced by the very good use of a variety of resources (including a very good range of visits to places of historical interest) to stimulate pupils' interest. Marking in Years 7 to 9 is helpful with clear targets for improvement, but there is scope for more marking based on GCSE criteria in Years 10 and 11.

112. Leadership is good with clear vision and direction. Management is also good with clear planning and effective strategies for improvement. Teachers work very well as a team and there is clear evidence of the sharing of both good practice and concerns. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Although teachers work hard to ensure that classrooms are visually stimulating, rooms are in poor decorative condition with peeling paintwork and badly stained carpets.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- In Years 7 to 9 the school meets the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.
- A small number of pupils in Year 11 are achieving well in the GCSE course offered.
- Religious education is not taught as a core subject in Years 10 and 11 as it should be.
- There are no specialist religious education teachers in the school.

Commentary

113. The school has experienced difficulties recently in recruiting specialist staff and as a result there is no specialist teacher in charge of the subject and all the teaching is by non-specialists. In Years 7 to 9 the provision is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus but in Years 10 and 11 requirements are not met and as a result provision is unsatisfactory overall.

114. Achievement in the early years is satisfactory and in line with local expectations. Pupils enter the school at or below expectations but they make satisfactory progress. They develop a sound understanding of the major features of the world's main religions and, as seen in a Year 8 class on creation stories, appreciate that there are different concepts of deity. They are able to recognise the value and use of symbolism and are beginning to use accurate terminology to describe beliefs. Pupils with SEN achieve as well as others because of the good supporting materials used in the teaching.

115. In the small option group studying philosophy and ethics for GCSE, pupils draw very successfully on previous religious knowledge to form valid opinions on a range of moral and ethical issues. In the lesson observed excellent teaching promoted a mature discussion on capital punishment based on sound information.

116. Teaching and learning are overall satisfactory. Although all teachers of Years 7 to 9 are non-specialists and most have not taught the subject before, they are competent practitioners and most prepare well using the specialist scheme of work and resources provided. This enables pupils to develop their knowledge satisfactorily but the development of concepts is less secure. Teachers generally lack the confidence to explore religious concepts and to involve pupils in any extensive discussion. In the best lessons planning is clear and objectives are shared with pupils. A range of strategies is used, including the use of ICT, to stimulate interest and develop understanding. In some lessons this is limited by the use of inappropriate or inaccurate terminology. Learning is also not helped by the current over-dependence on information and work sheets.

117. In the absence of a specialist subject leader the head of faculty is successfully maintaining a meaningful curriculum in Years 7 to 9. However, the quality of the provision needs improving across the school and in the short-term specialist training and advice is required. As at the time of the last inspection the subject again lacks a clear development plan that will help ensure that statutory requirements are met and the quality of teaching and learning is improved.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Examination results are well above average.
- Good teaching leads to good achievement for pupils.
- Good leadership and management have brought about good improvements since the last inspection.
- Information gathered from good assessment procedures is not used precisely enough to identify underachieving pupils.
- There are no specific strategies for identifying and challenging those pupils who are talented in the subject.
- Teaching materials and methods are not sufficiently adjusted for pupils with different levels of ability.

Commentary

118. Standards for pupils at the end of Year 9, measured by teacher assessments, are well above average. Eighty four per cent of pupils were awarded National Curriculum Level 5 or above in 2003. Work seen during the inspection does not support this high figure but, nevertheless, standards for Year 9 pupils are above average. Based on average attainment on entry to the school, this represents good achievement. Pupils are introduced to a good design methodology from Year 7 and this enables higher attaining pupils to develop good skills of research and analysis. This is evident in some Year 9 textiles folders, which contain research from a variety of sources, and evidence of testing and experimenting with materials and techniques. Pupils develop good graphic and computer skills, which enable them to record and develop design ideas. Lower attaining pupils make good progress and achieve well because of the structured nature of the course. Some pupils do not always edit information from the Internet or annotate other research material. Some resistant materials projects in Year 9 do not allow sufficient scope for higher attaining pupils to extend their own work. Consequently, whilst practical making skills are well developed, independent working skills are not.

119. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average. Results have been rising and provisional figures for 2003 indicate a further increase. Comparative figures for 2002 showed that pupils did not perform as well in technology as in some other subjects but 2003 figures show that this has been corrected. Girls do better than boys in examinations but there was no significant difference in the quality of their work seen during the inspection. The current standard of work for Year 11 pupils is above average. Some pupils, particularly in textiles and graphics, are working to very high standards and their folders contain detailed research, accurate analysis and evidence of a good understanding of designing and making. Higher attaining pupils use ICT well to improve the presentation of their work and for processing data from, for example, nutritional analysis and results of questionnaires in food technology, and for modelling circuits in electronics. Higher attaining pupils in resistant materials and textiles undertake ambitious projects. Lower attaining pupils and those with special needs achieve well because of the practical nature of the work. Because pupils are able to build on previous levels of skill and understanding, achievement is good.

120. Teaching and learning are good. Because lessons have clear objectives and teachers manage behaviour well, pupils work productively and with a sense of purpose. Consequently pupils' attitudes are good. Revised assessment procedures are better than at the last inspection, but teachers' use of assessment information is not yet precise enough to identify and correct pupils' underachievement. Good individual help and advice helps all pupils to make progress and achieve well, but specific strategies for identifying and extending gifted and talented pupils are not

sufficiently well developed. Some good practice for improving pupils' literacy and numeracy is not supported by fully formed policies and strategies. Lessons are well planned as part of a well thought out curriculum, and the quality of teaching is monitored regularly and good practice shared. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have up-to-date skills in ICT.

121. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Considerable hard work has been put into building a strong team of teachers and developing a broad technology curriculum. However, the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is not closely matched to the accommodation available and some food technology groups are taught in inappropriate areas. Because of good management the department is now in a stronger position to begin correcting these remaining weaknesses. Improvements since the last inspection have been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and Design

Provision in art and design in **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The well above average standards in GCSE examinations prepare pupils well for the next stages of their education.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes contribute to good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers make insufficient use of National Curriculum Levels to plan, assess and involve pupils in their own learning.

Commentary

122. Teacher assessments in 2003 show standards at the end of Year 9 to be broadly at expected levels for pupils' ages, with significant numbers attaining higher levels. In 2002, GCSE results were well above the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining grade A* was significantly above average. Pupils' individual performance in art was generally similar to, or slightly better than, performance in other subjects. Results in 2003 were even better. As is the case nationally, more girls than boys attain the higher standards.

123. In the work seen, standards in Year 9 are in line with expectations. Pupils, including those with SEN, achieve satisfactorily given their starting points. However, there is no scheme of work around which teachers can systematically and progressively build skills, knowledge and understanding. Year on year progress and achievement are good in some aspects, notably in the development of some drawing and modelling skills. They are weaker in terms of critical and analytical development to support independent decision-making, and in the skills that allow pupils to manipulate images using computers. Standards in these areas are lower and do not fully reflect pupils' capabilities.

124. Teaching and learning are good overall but teaching is more effective in examination classes than in Years 7 to 9. Pupils know what the examination requirements are, how the marking criteria are applied and what they can do to improve their performance. One-to-one tutorials are also very effective. These factors contribute positively to the very good results and achievement. In younger age groups, learning and assessment objectives are not made explicit and pupils' knowledge of how well they are achieving, and what they can do to improve, is not always spelt out. Too few opportunities are created for pupils to express themselves orally and in writing. In all years pupils are inspired by, and learn from, the work they see displayed in studios and around the school. The subject promotes the arts and makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural and spiritual development.

125. Leadership and management are satisfactory. High standards in examinations have been maintained and the department is efficiently run. Strategic leadership and planning is less well developed and the challenges of the curriculum in Years 7 - 9 have still to be tackled, notably in meeting requirements for ICT. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory in that standards in examinations have remained strong and pupils achieve well. However, as at the time of the last inspection there is not sufficient access to computers, which affects achievement.

Music

The provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good teaching ensures that all pupils are very well motivated and make very good progress.
- The range of opportunities for making music together and for learning instruments is excellent, contributing substantially to pupils' personal development and to links with the wider community.
- Outstanding leadership of the department focuses on maintaining and developing opportunities for pupils and improving standards of work.

Commentary

126. GCSE results in 2003 in music were above average, an improvement on the results of 2002. Almost twice as many boys as girls took the course. Also bucking the national trend, boys performed better than girls. Although many pupils take instrumental lessons, there is no obligation for GCSE pupils to take supplementary tuition. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are comfortably in line with national averages and that pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. In Year 9 standards are above average. Pupils' achievement is very good with no significant difference in achievement of boys and girls or of any minority groups. The department is highly supportive and uses a range of assistants, including student teachers, to ensure pupils with SEN achieve equally well. Their skills and self-confidence are also boosted by music therapy sessions. The talented, although not formally identified, also achieve very well, benefiting from the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities.

127. Teaching is very good across the whole school. Very good subject knowledge and skills set standards which challenge and motivate the pupils to learn very well. Excellent teaching methods and very well chosen musical illustration, combined with highly effective planning, give continuity, focus and progression in learning. This is consolidated by regular self-assessment exercises, in which pupils set themselves simple and effective targets for improvement. Active and fast-moving lessons make music very enjoyable and this is reflected in the very good collaboration of the pupils in group work. Assessment is good, because the very good relations between pupils and teachers enable oral feedback to be very effective. However, especially in Years 7 to 9, exercise books are inadequately monitored for accuracy.

128. Excellent leadership and management of the department has sustained all the very positive aspects since the previous inspection and issues, such as singing, use of ICT and accommodation have been very well addressed. There has been very good improvement over this period. Thirteen visiting teachers give vocal or instrumental lessons to a larger number of pupils than usual. The annual musical production is an excellent whole school collaboration, which also features strongly in liaison with feeder schools. The very high quality jazz and concert bands, in particular, represent the school in the wider community, touring regularly and assisting charities. The current staffing

changes are being very well managed and the imminent situation of having two full time class teachers, including one Advanced Skills Teacher (AST), should bring further developments in music. Improving sound-proofing in the department, the acquisition of more computers and the formal embedding of cross-school initiatives in the schemes of work would facilitate these.

Drama

Provision for drama is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils' poor attitudes to the subject at times lead to poor behaviour.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge but sometimes do not intervene swiftly enough when pupils drift off task.
- Significant numbers of pupils take part in school productions.

Commentary

129. Standards in drama in Years 7 - 9 are broadly average. However, a significant proportion of pupils do not achieve their potential because their behaviour is unsatisfactory and they do not take the subject, and their learning, seriously enough. In 2002 standards in GCSE examinations were above average but no pupils attained the higher grades and overall pupils achieved less well in drama than in many of their other subjects. Achievement was unsatisfactory.

130. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in the lessons seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use a suitable range of activities. Paired work is well managed but group work sometimes goes on for too long without the teacher intervening and bringing pupils back on task. Because a minority of the pupils demonstrate poor concentration their restlessness occasionally interrupts the learning of other pupils and at times results in poor behaviour. Teachers make sound provision for the development of literacy, particularly in Year 10 and 11 examination groups where, for example, the text and characters in *Those Blue Remembered Hills* were analysed and explored in discussion and written work. In younger classes pupils drew on their knowledge of television soap operas to identify plot and story line and then to devise and sequence their own improvised scenes.

131. There are weaknesses in leadership and management of the subject. The newly devised curriculum provides the structure which was previously lacking, but the necessary monitoring is not yet in place. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are a concern, however, and this hampers any improvement to standards and in the effectiveness of dealing with issues like, for example, drug abuse, crime and punishment and exploring them through drama. The subject is not currently making enough of a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in lessons. The impact is significantly different outside lessons, where after-school clubs and workshops and participation in school productions are good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good planning of activities enables students to learn well.
- Teachers' commitment and enthusiasm engages and challenges students in Years 7 - 9 very well.
- Assessment and marking often fails to show students how they can do better.
- A small but significant number of students in Years 10 and 11 are poorly motivated.

Commentary

132. Teachers assessed pupils completing Year 9 in 2003 as average. The present Years 7 to 9 are generally working in line with expectation for their age, although dance work is above expectation. GCSE Results in 2003 were average. Girls' results were well above boys, but they began their GCSE course at a higher level and did not achieve significantly better. Overall standards of students' GCSE work at present are average.

133. On entry to the school in Year 7 pupils have average practical skills. Their knowledge and understanding of performance are below average. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well, because their knowledge and understanding develop well. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is satisfactory, but some pupils fail to make satisfactory progress, because the GCSE course is not appropriate to their needs and this affects their motivation. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and achieve in line with their classmates.

134. Teaching and learning are good. Very good planning ensures that pupils' sports vocabulary and their knowledge and understanding of performance develop well. Those in Years 7, 8 and 9 generally learn very well because lessons are delivered at an appropriate pace and clear achievable targets are set. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to coach very well, as was seen in lessons where girls were introduced to soccer skills. Teachers' high expectations of good behaviour encourage a positive response and pupils really enjoy their lessons. This was seen in vibrant dance lessons where pupils' precision, timing and control in developing their own street dances were above expectation. Lessons contribute well to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils. Assessment and marking do not always help pupils' achievement, because they are not sufficiently aware of how they are doing or how they can do better.

135. Leadership and management of the department are good. Monitoring is developing well and areas for development well identified. Extra-curricular sports activities are strong. Talented sports players can develop their skills to a higher level through very good external coaching. Strong community links are developing well due to the School Sports Education Officer's good work with feeder schools. The unsatisfactory changing areas and lack of storage space, creating a potential hazard in the gymnasium, influence the quality of provision for the pupils.

136. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The young and enthusiastic team is already developing the department well. Thus, nearly all pupils interviewed say how much they enjoy their physical education.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

- The teaching of issues of a personal nature is very sensitively handled.
- The 'emotional intelligence' work helps pupils to build self-esteem very well.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and how it develops learning.
- The overall assessment by teachers of what pupils know and can do is unclear.

Commentary

137. Standards of work in Years 7, 8 and 9 are average. Standards of GCSE work in Years 10 and 11 are average. Data gathered in the inspection of what pupils know and can do in Years 7, 8 and 9 shows that their achievement is good, given their knowledge and understanding on entry to the school. Evidence gathered during the inspection of GCSE work in Years 10 and 11 shows that pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

138. Teaching and learning of citizenship are generally satisfactory. Good learning support material develops pupils' understanding of issues that they face in their lives. Work ensures that pupils are able to develop good enquiry and communication skills. They write satisfactorily about a variety of issues. Personal issues are very sensitively handled, particularly through the very good 'emotional intelligence' programme. However, assessment procedures are unsatisfactory and marking is not rigorous. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Where non-specialist teachers' subject knowledge is less secure, opportunities to develop pupils' work are missed and this limits their progress.

139. The management and leadership of citizenship are unsatisfactory. The schemes of work for citizenship in Years 7 to 11 meet all requirements well. However, as there is no head of department to organise and monitor the work of the teaching team, these schemes are not always sufficiently adapted to match individual needs of pupils. Even so, pupils are given good opportunity to learn about rights and responsibilities and the GCSE citizenship short course provides a good relevant programme for work in Years 10 and 11.

140. The leadership and organisation of PSHE is satisfactory. The heads of year monitor this well. The pilot programme on 'emotional intelligence' is very good. Pupils' self-esteem and confidence are being boosted by this scheme. Careers education is also adequately incorporated into the programme.

141. Understanding of pupils' own learning is also being well developed. Their work is well supported by external speakers, such as prison officers and nurses, and a lot of time is given by the PSHE team to develop such links. Pupils report that the drugs and sex education programme is particularly good. Good work is being undertaken through the equal opportunities working party to give pupils opportunity to share their concerns. Very good links with the behaviour support service have helped establish a mentoring link between Year 11 and Year 8 pupils. Mentors report that they are pleased to give something back to the school through helping fellow pupils. Year 7 pupils indicate that mentoring has helped them a lot.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

142. In the inspection, five 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 at GCE A Level completed in 2002.

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
Leisure and Recreation VCE	8	100	86.9	12.5	12.7	75.0	58.3
Art and Design	10	100	96.1	50.0	48.7	84.0	85.1
Biology	9	100	91.6	55.6	36.3	91.1	74.1
Business Studies	5	60.0	96.4	0	32.8	32.0	76.5
Chemistry	5	100	94.0	20.0	45.9	80.0	81.1
Drama	9	100	98.1	11.1	41.5	73.3	82.9
English literature	10	100	98.5	20.0	43.7	70.0	84.3
Design and Technology	6	100	95.3	0	35.5	60.0	76.5
History	5	100	97.1	40.0	41.0	76.0	81.2
Mathematics	6	100	93.3	16.7	52.2	80.0	84.7
Music	7	100	97.7	57.1	41.8	85.7	82.2
Other Social Studies	5	100	94.3	20.0	38.9	64.0	77.7
Physics	8	100	92.8	37.5	42.8	85.0	78.6
Sociology	11	100	95.4	18.2	39.6	67.3	79.1
Sports/physical education Studies	6	100	95.4	18.2	39.6	67.3	79.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subject was English but one lesson was observed of each of French, German and Spanish in which teaching and learning were at least good.

ENGLISH

Provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Results and recruitment at AS Level improved in 2003.
- Sound teaching helps students in Year 12 achieve well from a relatively low attainment base.
- Good assessment practices mean that students are well-informed about their standards.
- Despite the introduction of a Transition Unit, many AS students find work at this level difficult.

Commentary

143. Standards overall are below average, as in the last inspection, although they are better in Year 12 than in Year 13. Results at A Level in 2002 were below average; in 2003 there was a slight improvement. AS Level results in 2002 were a little below average but there was a much improved picture in 2003.

144. Standards in Year 12 are above average and achievement is good, considering the modest level of attainment on entry. Many students express their views freely, although they lack a mature vocabulary and style of expression. High attaining students are well-organised with good research skills and a developing capacity to read in depth. Most have a good basic grasp of plot, character, theme and symbolism in the texts studied. The work of weaker students is more superficial, but good progress is seen in the standard of essay writing over the last half term. At this point in the course a small proportion are struggling to meet the demands of A Level work and find the detailed focus on long texts challenging.

145. Standards in Year 13 are below average, but this represents satisfactory achievement since Year 11. Students' analytical skills are developing adequately. Many show good individual responses to texts, but no confident use of the language of critical analysis. Few students develop their ideas in sufficient detail to gain the higher grades. Weaker students often express themselves clumsily. The small numbers affect the quality of discussion in lessons, where there is little expectation of precise expression of ideas.

146. Teaching is satisfactory. Students are helped to make progress by teachers' good command of their subject and good assessment practices. Essays are well annotated and students have a clear idea of how well they are doing and how to improve. Most teachers are successful in using a variety of methods to explore texts from different angles. Students are provided with copious amounts of background material. While much of this is useful, it tends to inhibit the development of independent learning.

147. Leadership and management of the team of experienced teachers are satisfactory. There have been few changes since the last inspection. Recruitment to A Level is improving, but teachers need to do more to capture the interest and enthusiasm of students in the early stages of their AS Level course: a small but significant number admit to poor motivation. Standards at A Level have not altered significantly, but the recent successes at AS Level suggest there is now good potential for future improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics in the Sixth Form is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very knowledgeable teachers who plan well and have good relationships with students.
- Hard working students who are mutually supportive.
- The increase in numbers of students who start the course and the high retention rate from Year 12 to Year 13.

Commentary

148. Results in recent years have been satisfactory but the numbers of students who follow the course have been small. These small numbers have increased so that the current Year 12 has about twice as many students studying mathematics as the previous year. Students have confidence in their teachers and believe that they can succeed in mathematics by building on their prior achievements at GCSE. They start the course after gaining a grade B or above at higher level and work hard. They are successful early on because the course starts with the statistics module. The work builds slowly from the statistics covered at GCSE Level and the analysis of ideas encourages students to collaborate by discussing their work with each other at an early stage. This develops a mutually supportive atmosphere that is beneficial when more difficult aspects of the course are studied. Standards seen are in line with expectations for an Advanced Level course. Students appreciate the pre-course support given to them to develop their confidence, especially in algebraic topics.

149. Teaching is clear and wherever possible links topics to students' own experience. For example, a lesson on friction used a simple but effective demonstration of a board rubber sliding along a table. Students respond well to the practical approach and readily ask and answer questions so that they can improve. They appreciate the different and more mature relationship that exists between them and their teachers. Students are helped to improve their work by good feedback; much of this is informal so that they all benefit from the ensuing discussions.

150. The Sixth Form courses are organised and managed well with modules that suit students' general interests and combine well with other subjects. Generally those studying physics also study mechanics as these subjects contain much common ground. There are sufficient resources including computers in the Sixth Form study area that are equipped with software so that students can study on their own outside normal lesson times.

151. Across the curriculum students' mathematical skills are sufficient for them to access all the Advanced Level courses offered. There is a GCSE re-sit course for students who wish to gain a grade C in mathematics. Planning for this is on an 'as required' basis and students negotiate lessons with their teachers. There is a key skills component in the GNVQ course that covers application of number. These lessons tend to assist individual students with their work rather than provide a planned course. There is no course offered for students not studying mathematics who require knowledge beyond GCSE to support their studies.

SCIENCE

152. The focus subject was biology. One lesson in each of chemistry and physics was observed. Teaching was good or very good. Teachers' subject knowledge was good and excellent relationships between teacher and students promoted good learning. The pace and structure of lessons were well matched to students' abilities and good support was given to one pupil with SEN.

BIOLOGY

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good teaching encourages students to develop independent learning skills.
- High level of commitment on the part of students and teachers ensures good progress.
- High level of presentation and good use of ICT enhances students' attainment.
- Lack of suitable accommodation for some lessons restricts teaching.
- Students' critical faculties are under-developed. They need to build confidence to debate scientific evidence convincingly.

Commentary

153. Three of the four A Level students achieved satisfactorily or well in 2003. Achievement was satisfactory or good in the 2003 AS examination, with over 80 per cent of students reaching their target level. Overall, students are achieving well. Good planning ensured that Year 13 students learning about classification were able to develop their observational and reasoning skills. They were able to make predictions about the relationship between structure and function. In another lesson, good teaching focused on writing skills. Students worked well in groups to produce model answers to examination questions, discussing how much specific information was necessary and relevant. Students' answers in class and in written work, however, show that they need more practice in the application of their knowledge and ideas to new situations. Only in this way are they going to gain the confidence to argue in scientific terms.

154. Year 12 students' standard of work is average and their achievement is good. They have made a good transition from GCSE work. Good teaching has promoted independent learning skills as was seen in presentation material on cell organelles. Students had used a variety of sources, including the Internet, to supplement the information in their textbooks to very good effect. Presentation and the use of ICT were impressive in the samples seen. In another lesson, students battled well in understanding the three-dimensional structure of carbohydrate molecules. It is this sort of exercise that provides the scope for students to become creatively involved in their own learning.

155. Learning is enhanced by the thorough marking and commentary found in students' files. Teaching is particularly effective because teachers are confident in their subject and their background knowledge is wide, as was shown when discussing the significance of tapeworms as parasites. The very good rapport between teachers and students promotes good learning, but students seem reluctant to discuss with teachers in class and are too ready to accept factual information without question. The best learning was seen in lessons where a variety of activities maintained students' interest. Teachers need to make their expectations more clear.

156. Sound management ensures the department is effective. Teachers work well as a team and are deployed so that their expertise can be fully exploited. However, teaching is adversely affected by limitations in accommodation, which has necessitated a significant proportion of lessons being taught outside the science block. Tracking of individual performance enables good monitoring and enhancement of students' attainment. Biology in the Sixth Form is developing well, but management needs to be given more independence within the science faculty.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

- Teaching is good.
- Students' enjoyment and concentration assist their progress.
- The good quality of equipment and resources promotes learning.
- Staffing difficulties have meant a lack of continuity in the teaching and management of the subject.
- The low attainment level in ICT of some students at the start of the course adversely affects their progress.

Commentary

157. In 2002 results in the AS Level examinations in ICT were well below national average. As the attainment of students on entry to Year 12 was well below national average, this represents satisfactory achievement. A Level results for 2003 show an improvement on previous years' results.

158. Work seen in lessons and in folders for Years 12 and 13 is below average. This represents good achievement since these students entered the course with well below average attainment. Students in Year 13 use desk top publishing, database and spreadsheet packages effectively. They are aware how computer systems are developed, and demonstrate that they can apply their knowledge to solving a variety of problems. In a Year 13 lesson students displayed a good understanding of how to analyse user interfaces. They discussed their work confidently, and higher attaining students gave good support to others in the group who were less secure in their knowledge.

159. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good subject knowledge which they use to good effect in planning lessons and in providing individual assistance to students. Lessons are well structured to support all levels of ability, and work is tailored to meet individual needs. This is

particularly important, as students have entered the course with different levels of experience and skill. Some students have not studied ICT previously, so their starting point is well below average. Student self assessment and target setting are well used, so that students are aware of the level at which they are working and clear about what they need to do to improve.

160. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staffing difficulties involving long term illness and the recruitment of temporary teachers have resulted in a lack of continuity in teaching, and in leadership and management. This lack of continuity has had an adverse effect on the learning and achievement of students. However, the head of department is clear about what needs to be done to improve the attainment of students. Excellent technical support for students and staff assists in raising standards. The accommodation and resources are good. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to use the ICT facilities during their private study time.

161. Students contribute well to their own learning. They are enthusiastic about the subject and work in a purposeful manner. Relationships between students are very good; they cooperate and collaborate well with one another.

162. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Teaching has improved, though it has recently been affected adversely by staffing difficulties which have led to a lack of continuity in teaching. Further investment in computers and other resources has improved the environment for learning.

HUMANITIES

163. The focus subject was history. One lesson was observed in both sociology and psychology in which teaching and learning were at least good.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching is enthusiastic and of a good standard. As a result, students learn well and show positive attitudes.
- Teachers make very good use of resources, especially lap-top computers. This is having a beneficial impact on students' abilities to carry out independent research.
- History is becoming a more popular option with students of all abilities. This is having a positive impact on standards.
- Students need more structured opportunities to develop their speaking skills and their self-confidence.
- There is scope for more marking based on examination criteria on a regular basis, so that students are clearer about what they need to do in order to gain higher marks.

Commentary

164. It is not possible to make meaningful statistical comparisons with the 2002 and 2003 A Level results because so few students sat the examinations. However, all achieved well in terms of their prior abilities. Although the 2003 AS results were well below average, there is no evidence that these results form part of a pattern or that standards in the subject are declining. These same students are now achieving well in Year 13, not only in the context of their previous AS results but also their GCSE results. They analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence to produce well-balanced arguments. Most students write well, although they lack confidence when analysing or explaining verbally. They would benefit from the provision of more

structured opportunities to improve their speaking skills and their self-confidence, and also from more guidance in examination techniques. Students in Year 12 have made a good start to their course and their standards are broadly average. They write clearly and are able to support their arguments with a good range of historical evidence.

165. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers are clearly enthusiastic about their subject and students are positive about their history lessons. The numbers opting for history have greatly increased. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that students develop their knowledge, understanding and skills within a secure environment. Marking is of a high standard, although there is scope for more regular marking based on examination criteria. Teachers make very good use of resources. For example, students have access to a set of 15 lap-top computers which means that their skills in independent research are improving.

166. Leadership and management are both good. Teachers are reflective and are working hard to improve provision. Strategies designed to deal with the 2003 AS Level results are already having a positive impact on standards.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Lessons in design and technology were sampled. Teaching and learning were at least satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Lessons in art and music were sampled. Teaching and learning were very good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

One lesson in physical education was observed. Teaching and learning were good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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