

INSPECTION REPORT

RALPH ALLEN SCHOOL

Bath

LEA area: Bath and North-East Somerset

Unique reference number: 109305

Headteacher: Ms L Lee

Lead inspector: Bob Allan

Dates of inspection: 26th - 30th January 2004

Inspection number: 262816

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1041
School address:	Claverton Down Road Bath
Postcode:	BA2 7AD
Telephone number:	(01225) 832 936
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Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Helen Edwards
Date of previous inspection:	18 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ralph Allen School is an average sized non-denominational comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. It is located on the outskirts of Bath and serves a mixed community from prosperous districts as well as low-income areas. It holds School for Health, Investor in People, Investor in Student Careers and Sportmark Gold awards and is a Partnership Promotion School. It has recently been granted specialist status as a science school. Almost all pupils are of white British background with a slightly higher than typical percentage of pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue. Currently no pupil is in the early stages of learning English. Attainment on entry is broadly average. More pupils join the school than leave at other than normal times. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs of whom the most numerous are those with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is average and the school has a special speech and communication unit.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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	Brian Skelton	Team inspector	English
20457	Brian Fletcher	Team inspector	Mathematics (11-16)
3753	Hamish Wilkie	Team inspector	Mathematics (16-18)
16786	Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science (11-16) Biology (16-18)
8530	John Adams	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology
1085	John Laver	Team inspector	History (11-16) Physical education (16-18)
17618	Mike Hillary	Team inspector	Geography
31540	Alison Edwards	Team inspector	French
8183	Gillian Keevill	Team inspector	Physical education (11-16)
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	Religious education History (16-18)
28002	Sue Taylor	Team inspector	Special educational needs
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ralph Allen School is an effective school that provides good value for money. Standards achieved are above average as a result of consistently good teaching. Staff have created a very good ethos that promotes effective learning and personal development. Examination results in the sixth form are well above average as a consequence of very good teaching. Good leadership provides clear direction for the school; management is satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has a very good climate for learning and is very inclusive.
- Pupils and students achieve very well in English to reach well above average standards throughout the school.
- Overall results in A-level examinations are well above average as a result of very good teaching.
- Very good assessment procedures are very effectively used so that pupils and students know how to improve their work.
- Staff have high expectations of work rate and behaviour.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory in both the main school and the sixth form.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory in that not all pupils are taught information and communication technology (ICT).
- There is unsatisfactory accommodation for design and technology, music and science and insufficient specialist resources for ICT.

Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Effective action has significantly improved assessment but action on two key issues was not taken in sufficient time for them to be fully addressed. After a decline in GCSE results, standards have now risen to their former level.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Overall, **achievement is good**. Standards of work are above national expectations and achievement is good by the end of Year 9. Standards are currently above national expectations in Year 11 and the sixth form and achievement is good. In English, standards are well above national expectations and achievement is very good throughout the school. In recent years, the gap between the standards of boys and girls in English at the end of Year 9 has all but closed. In mathematics and science, standards are above national expectations and achievement is good. In ICT, standards are in line with national expectations overall. They are above national expectations in Year 9, where pupils achieve well, but below expectations in Year 11, where achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented achieve well.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attitudes and behaviour are good but attendance is unsatisfactory, both in the main school and the sixth form.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good quality of education** for its pupils and students. **Teaching is good in the main school**, consequently learning is good. **Teaching is very good in the sixth form**. For those students who attend regularly, learning is very good; overall, learning is good. The curriculum is satisfactory overall but not so in Years 10 and 11, where provision for ICT is unsatisfactory. Pupils are well cared for so that, whatever pupils' individual circumstances, they achieve well. Pupils are provided with very good guidance and support so that they understand very well how they can improve.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is good and provides the school with clear direction that produces effective improvements. Management is satisfactory because recent staff reductions mean that some monitoring is insufficiently regular to identify emerging weaknesses. The governing body has initiated several significant improvements but it did not start work on other issues in time for statutory shortcomings, identified at the time of the last inspection, to be rectified as yet. Recent progress has been productive, so overall governance is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents generally consider that the school provides well for their children and value the lengths to which staff go to ensure that all pupils can take full advantage of what the school offers. They are pleased with the way that staff deal effectively with incidents of bullying and help pupils with special education needs to achieve well. Several are concerned that homework is not set at the right level although, generally, inspectors did not find this to be so. Many parents feel that the school does not have sufficient books and other resources. Inspectors agree that this view is justified in some areas.

Pupils generally enjoy school and appreciate how well they are progressing and developing because of what it provides. Their completed questionnaires painted a gloomier picture of behaviour and greater concerns for bullying than were substantiated in extensive discussions with pupils of all ages during the inspection. They know they are secure in school and know very well how to call upon support if it is needed.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To improve attendance in the main school and the sixth form and establish reliable registration arrangements in the sixth form.
- To complete the programme of curricular improvement so that all pupils are taught information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11.
- To establish provision for religious education in the sixth form.
- To seek better accommodation for design and technology, science, music, and specialist resources for ICT.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Teach the full National Curriculum and religious education.
- Provide daily collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT RALPH ALLEN SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ralph Allen School has a good, cost effective sixth form. Students achieve well and overall results in A-level examinations are regularly above the national average. This is because they benefit from expert teaching and very good assessment procedures. Teachers and tutors use these well to track students' progress and provide all necessary guidance so students know exactly how to improve the quality of their work. Unsatisfactory attendance means that a significant proportion of students fail to benefit fully from this very good provision.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most recent A-level results in English literature, ICT and physical education are very high in comparison with national averages.
- Very effective teaching enables students to learn very well and regularly reach above national average results at A-level.
- Attendance is currently unsatisfactory and registration procedures are not followed consistently.
- Assessment is very good and provides students with very clear indications of how to improve the quality of their work.
- Accommodation for independent study is inadequate for a sixth form of this size.

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	Very good. Consistently very good teaching ensures students achieve very well and attain well above average A-level results.
Mathematics	Very good. Teaching and learning are particularly strong because of the great experience and very good subject knowledge of the teachers. Hence, students achieve well and reach above average standards; some go on very successfully to <i>further mathematics</i> .
Science	Good in biology. Standards in biology are above average. Students learn and achieve well as a result of effective and knowledgeable teaching. Students have very good attitudes to their work and make good progress from GCSE to A level.
Humanities	Good in history and geography. Students are achieving well in both courses because of the good teaching. In history, this is characterised by passion for the subject combined with high levels of challenge; in geography, by close attention to assessment requirements.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good in music and art and design. Teaching and learning in music are good in Year 12 so students achieve well and make good progress from GCSE to AS level. There are no Year 13 students preparing for A-level music in 2004.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Very good in physical education. Very good leadership, management, teaching, learning and students' very good attitudes result in them achieving very well and reaching high standards in examinations.

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

Advice, guidance and support for students are **good**. Students benefit from good guidance before they enrol in the sixth form. Well-structured procedures ensure that those less capable of working independently receive the support they need. Students receive good, well-informed advice as they prepare for further stages of their education or for employment. Recent staff reductions and an unforeseeable absence have not adversely affected the good level of personal welfare.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are **satisfactory**. Leadership is good, in that careful direction is given to ensuring that courses are well-developed and provision meets the needs of most students. Management is satisfactory. Monitoring ensures that individual students are well advised, guided and supported in their learning but progress to provide religious education has been slow and monitoring of attendance and registration has not been sufficiently rigorous to reveal weaknesses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students speak highly of the school and of their teachers. They particularly appreciate the additional time that teachers give to help them improve their work. Most students value the good and trusting relationships they have with their teachers and tutors. However, a significant minority express a sense of isolation as they currently feel they have limited access to senior staff. This is partly due to the unexpected absence of one teacher and recent staff reductions. However, many students do not attend registrations, tutorials or assemblies where information and support are provided.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards overall are **above average** by the end of Year 9, by the end of Year 11, and in the sixth form. Pupils and students achieve well in all years. In English, standards are well above average and achievement is very good throughout the school. In mathematics and science, standards are above average and pupils achieve well. In ICT, standards are average overall; they are above average in Year 9 where pupils achieve well but below average in Year 11 where achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003, the results of national tests for 14 year-olds were well above the average for pupils in similar schools.
- GCSE results have improved sharply so that they were average overall in 2003 and above the average for similar schools.
- A-level results in 2003 were well above the national average.
- Pupils achieve very well in English, geography and art and design by the end of Year 11.
- Students make very good progress from GCSE to A level in English literature, ICT and physical education.
- Overall achievement in ICT in Year 11 is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

1. Although the results of tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were slightly down on those in 2002, they were well above the average of similar schools. The trend in recent results continues to show an overall rise in comparison with results nationally. The difference between results of boys and girls in English has all but closed in recent years as boys' results have risen to above average. Boys did a little better than girls in mathematics and science compared to boys nationally. Teachers' assessments in ICT in 2003 showed standards to be above average overall, with girls doing better than boys. Bearing in mind pupils' attainment when they join the school in Year 7, they make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 9. This is due to the impact of consistently good teaching, their improving attitudes to learning and good leadership and management of the subjects they study.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.8 (36.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.6 (36.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.9 (36.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 169 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Following a decline since the last inspection, GCSE results have been rising in recent years so that, in 2003, they were in line with the national average and above the average for schools whose pupils performed similarly in national tests for 14 year olds in 2001. These pupils achieved well. Those currently in Year 11 are also achieving well as a result of good, and often very good, teaching promoted by good leadership and management. The below average attendance of some pupils hampers their progress so that they do not achieve as well as they might. Results in English literature, physical education, drama, art and design, geography and those of boys in French were well above the national average in 2003. They were below

average in design and technology, business studies and German. Boys did better than girls in English language and they narrowed the typical gap between the genders in French. Girls did better than boys in science, physical education and ICT.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	60 (54)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (90)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.3 (34.7)	35.6 (34.7)

There were 176 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. With the exceptions of English, where they are well above national expectations, and music where they are in line with expectations, the standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 is above average. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work seen are well above national expectations in English, geography and art and design but, in Year 11, below expectations in ICT as there is not sufficient provision for the teaching of specialist applications in different subjects.
4. The literacy skills of most pupils are above national expectations and improve as they go through the school. Effective contributions come from teaching in English, French, German, science, geography and drama. In lessons, pupils demonstrate very good speaking and listening skills, for example in geography and English. Standards of numeracy are above average and pupils handle numerical problems in other subjects well. Competence in ICT is sufficient for pupils to apply their skills effectively in other subjects.
5. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in their lessons and make good progress towards the specific targets in their individual education plans. Pupils in the language resource base make satisfactory progress towards the targets that relate to their specific difficulties. They achieve well and often very well in the development of their literacy skills. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well.

Sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.4 (95.9)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	52.3 (47.6)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	281.6 (264)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 62 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. The A-level results in 2003 were well above average overall, an improvement on the preceding two years when they had been above average. This is mainly because the performance of female students has improved over this period. Results in English literature, physical education and ICT were very high in comparison with national averages and they were well above average in music, chemistry and history. Students made very good progress in music and history, and good progress in chemistry. Results were above average in mathematics, physics and geography. Considering students' GCSE results, students made very good progress and achieved very well in mathematics; they achieved well in geography. Results were broadly average in biology and below average in art and design although students achieved results much as expected. Results in French and German were below average and fell short of expectations based on overall GCSE results.

- Standards of work seen in the subjects inspected were well above nationally expected levels in English and mathematics, and above national expectations in physical education. They were broadly in line with expected levels in art and design and history. Achievement in English, mathematics, music and physical education is very good and it is good in art and design, history and geography. Overall achievement is good and the quality of teaching is very good. Current arrangements for the management of the sixth form are not sufficient to ensure good attendance and consistent registration procedures. Those students whose attendance is irregular do not take advantage of the very good teaching and do not achieve as well as they are capable.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour is **good** in the main school and **very good** in the sixth form. Their attitudes to work and towards others are good throughout the school. Attendance is unsatisfactory in the main school and in the sixth form. Punctuality is unsatisfactory in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils value the school environment in which instances of oppressive behaviour, such as bullying, racism and other forms of harassment, are dealt with effectively.
- Pupils develop well due to the high expectations staff have of their behaviour and the range of effective strategies used to control any misconduct by pupils.
- Pupils' very good attitudes make a very significant contribution to their achievement.
- The school is not doing enough to improve the level of attendance.
- Pupils are generally enthusiastic in their approach to lessons and to the activities provided for them outside the school day.

Commentary

- The school has a very clear system for ensuring good behaviour which has widespread support from pupils and parents. Overall, behaviour is good although there is a significant minority of pupils who fail, on occasion, to achieve the high standards expected by the school. Outside classrooms, pupils are attentive in assemblies, eat their lunches in a calm atmosphere and move around the school in an orderly but purposeful manner. The school is continually looking to improve its response to poor behaviour.
- Most pupils are keen to come to school and approach their lessons with enthusiasm. However, some lose concentration quickly when the pace of the lesson is too slow or the content not made interesting enough. There is a notable improvement in their attitudes to work as they move through the school. This reflects the efforts of teachers to instil a strong work ethic in their pupils.
- As in any school of this size, bullying occurs and the fact is recognised openly by all concerned. However, the vast majority of parents and pupils feel that any concerns are treated seriously and appropriate action is promptly taken. The topic is discussed openly in assemblies, through surveys and in the *Education for Life* programme. Instances of other types of oppressive behaviour, such as racial or sexual harassment, are extremely rare and are dealt with very effectively.
- Pupils' personal development is good and relationships in the school are very good. Pupils are taught to consider the meaning and purpose of life, particularly through assemblies and the philosophy and ethics programme. They have a good respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others and can distinguish well between right and wrong. This was evident during thought-provoking assemblies, presented by Year 10 pupils, on the theme of the holocaust. Pupils of all ages watched respectfully and were visibly moved by the message. There are

fewer opportunities for spiritual development in other subjects. Pupils have a good understanding of their own and others' cultural traditions as these are raised in many subjects, particularly art and design, English, geography, philosophy and ethics and music. Pupils' social development is good and this aids their learning in many lessons where they collaborate and work well together. They take their social responsibilities seriously and many pupils are involved in community work. The work of the school council is effective in extending pupils' social responsibilities.

12. Overall, pupils with special educational needs behave well in lessons and when taught in small groups and individually. Occasionally, pupils with recognised behavioural difficulties can be unco-operative. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in the language resource base, where they are taught individually, are excellent.

Attendance

13. Attendance has been below the national average in recent years, with little sign of improvement. The system for recording attendance in Years 7 to 11 is computerised and registers are diligently completed at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. The school's personal adviser works closely and to good effect with pupils who have a history of poor attendance. Records show that the attendance of those pupils following the work-related programme is generally much improved. However, there is no regular detailed analysis of absence figures to identify why there are striking differences in attendance rates between tutor groups in the same year or whether non-attendance is particularly prevalent amongst particular groups of pupils. The school does not place enough emphasis on the importance of good attendance through such measures as high-profile displays in public areas and classrooms or a range of individual and tutor-group rewards. The school too readily authorises holidays during term-time and the number of requests has almost doubled so far this year.
14. Few pupils are late for lessons but too many are regularly absent at the beginning of registration. Recent transport problems, outside the control of the school, have influenced this but there was also a similar picture for the whole of last year. The lack of a structured approach to the use of the registration period for academic or personal development has led to several pupils not valuing its importance.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.9	School data	2.3
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

15. The school has a significant minority of pupils with challenging behaviour, several of whom have been excluded by other schools. This helps to explain why it has a very high number of fixed-period exclusions when compared with other secondary schools. However, the fact that no pupils have been permanently excluded in the last year bears testimony to the efforts staff make to help such pupils. The high percentage of exclusions of pupils in particular ethnic groups is the result of individual circumstances rather than anything related to prejudicial treatment.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	940	130	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	46	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	11	18	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	16	6	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	1	0
Chinese	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	13	0	0

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

Sixth form

16. Students behave very well and their attitudes to school are good. There are several opportunities for them to become involved in school life or to take on areas of responsibility within the sixth form, or in the school as a whole. Although Year 12 students undertake tasks in the main school, there are few opportunities for them to make their mark or assume a leading role in new initiatives.
17. Students' attitudes to their own learning are very good and contribute well to their achievement although some do not attend as often as necessary to make the best of the very good teaching. The method of recording attendance in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. There is no central point for controlled registration or routine monitoring with the result that many students do not register. Consequently, there is no accurate record of how many students are in school at any one time, constituting a risk to students' health and safety. Whilst students are generally punctual to lessons, some teachers report that individual students frequently fail to attend their lessons. Tutors do not deal with these instances consistently.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils and students. Teaching is **good** and in the sixth form, it is **very good**. Despite some shortcomings, the curriculum is satisfactory with some imaginative features. Pupils and students benefit from good levels of personal care and welfare and very good levels of personal guidance during lessons and at other times.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is consistently **good** so that pupils learn well and their achievement is good. Consequently, results are good in National Curriculum tests and teachers' assessments. Very good teaching is more evident in Years 10 and 11 so that pupils are well prepared for GCSE examinations. Assessment is very good and enables pupils to understand how to improve their work very

effectively. In the sixth form, teaching is very good, so that well above average standards of attainment are maintained.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and their assistants have very high expectations of pupils and of their conduct.
- Consistently good teaching in almost all subjects leads to good progress in comparison with similarly capable pupils in other schools.
- Teachers know their subjects very well and this provides the basis for effective teaching, especially in the sixth form.
- Assessment is used consistently very well to set targets that pupils and students understand and against which teachers monitor progress very well.
- When challenge is not well matched to pupils' capabilities, inattention leads to distracting behaviour and insufficient progress for some younger pupils.
- The overall progress of pupils with special educational needs is not monitored as thoroughly as their progress towards individual targets.

Commentary

18. Very good or excellent teaching was seen in most subjects, including English, science, mathematics, ICT, history, geography, French, German, religious education, physical education and art and design. As a result, good learning is commonplace. Subjects are generally well led and this contributes effectively to consistently good quality of teaching. Staff expect pupils to behave well and work purposefully. They plan well and take good account of pupils' different capabilities, so that all pupils are very effectively challenged. Teachers provide pupils with very stimulating presentations and related activities. They use time well so that pace and interest are sustained throughout lessons. Teachers introduce lessons well so that pupils know clearly what is expected of them and what their goals are. Teachers make skilful use of questions so pupils answer readily, offering reasons and evidence. Staff deal very effectively with any misbehaviour so that this does not usually exert any adverse effect on the learning of other pupils. Pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, whose attendance is poor do not make satisfactory progress and their overall achievement is not as high as it should be.
19. Pupils' good attitudes to learning contribute significantly to their achievement as they mature through the school. Teachers plan the balance of work to include increasing opportunities for pupils to use their own initiative so that they learn to work independently. This is a very significant factor in pupils' successes in preparing for examinations in Year 11 and the sixth form. In lessons for older pupils and students, the very good, often excellent, relationships create a sense of shared endeavour to achieve well, whatever the capabilities of pupils. However, in a few lessons for younger pupils, particularly when the work that they are set does not match their capabilities well, unhelpful attitudes lead to misbehaviour and slow pace of learning.
20. The teaching and learning in small groups and individual sessions, taught by learning support staff are good and sometimes very good. The best teaching here is characterised by very good planning, incorporating strategies and resources to meet individual needs, and is designed to boost success in mainstream lessons. Where teaching is less effective, it is due to the uncooperative behaviour of some pupils. Learning support assistants know pupils very well and use their initiative productively in the classroom so that they use their time effectively.
21. Subject teachers are aware of pupils' special educational needs through the well written and informative individual education plans. They involve these pupils well, by asking skilful questions, adapting their approaches and offering carefully selected resources. In some lessons, teachers rely on the good quality of support or on setting arrangements and so do not provide different tasks for pupils who would benefit from them.

22. The general level of provision for pupils with special educational needs in lessons is good due to the use of learning support assistants and the knowledge they have of their pupils, which enables them to use appropriate strategies. However, this is not always efficient when the teacher has not planned for their involvement. Learning support assistants form a mutually supportive, strong team, who share strategies and are very focused on providing pupils with help.
23. Learning support assistants teach individual sessions in the language resource base very well because they know the pupils well and have very good and trusting relationships with them. Their competence is recognised and they are increasingly responsible for planning these lessons.
24. Teachers effectively communicate their thorough assessments so that pupils and students are very well aware of their level of performance and how to improve. By involving pupils in setting targets, teachers help them to understand what is expected of them as a minimum and what levels they should try to reach. Teachers use the system consistently to enable pupils to assess their own levels and set targets for improvement. As a result, many pupils can readily explain their performance and what they can do to raise the standard of their work. Pupils effectively evaluate their own and each others' work in music, art and design, geography and drama. Recording of progress is very systematic and indicates pupils' progress towards their target grades. Marking is good, regular, frequent and diagnostic. This helps pupils improve their work. Within lessons, pupils regularly receive good verbal feedback.
25. Pupils with special educational needs are regularly assessed, but this information is not linked to the whole-school system for monitoring pupils' progress. It is not organised in an accessible form that enables teachers to evaluate achievement in relation to specific difficulties.

Sixth form

26. Teaching is very good overall. Strengths are in English literature, mathematics and physical education. Teachers' excellent knowledge, both of their specialist subjects and of the requirements of examinations, enables them to prepare and plan lessons that are consistently very effective. Students' attitudes to learning are very good but some attend irregularly so do not benefit fully from the very good provision made by the school. The depth of teachers' knowledge means that they can spontaneously recall rich and varied examples to illustrate concepts and respond to students' questions. They also show very clear insights into students' likely misunderstandings so they anticipate these very well. They provide students with direction and potentially fruitful lines of enquiry rather than direct answers, so that students' capacity for independent learning is very well developed. Students benefit as much from the very good assessment procedures as pupils in the main school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 158 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (3.1%)	48 (30.2%)	68 (42.8%)	36 (22.6%)	2 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall. It offers an appropriate range of opportunities for pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen and for students following academic courses in the sixth form. However, the provision of ICT is unsatisfactory for the majority of pupils in Year 11 and the school does not meet the statutory requirement of providing a daily act of collective worship.

Opportunities for enrichment are good, with very good provision for physical education and sport. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen benefit from a good range of opportunities in English, physical education, ICT, modern foreign languages and personal, social and health education.
- There are very good additional activities in physical education and sports.
- A targeted programme of vocational education for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 is having a good impact upon attitudes and achievement.
- Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the main school curriculum and very good additional help where necessary.
- The school does not offer the required programmes in ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11, or in religious studies for sixth formers.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
- Inadequate accommodation limits achievement in GCSE food technology and some groups are too large for the workshop space.
- A shortage of resources for music, modern foreign languages and ICT narrows the curriculum in these subjects.

Commentary

27. The school's curriculum is satisfactory overall. Provision is particularly good in English, in which there is a strong emphasis on individual learning and, subsequently, very good achievement. All pupils in Years 8 and 9 study two modern foreign languages. Very good on-line resources enrich the ICT curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and those following the GCSE course. Provision is also strong in physical education, where there is a high participation rate in extra-curricular sport. The programme for personal, social and health education is thorough, well organised and much valued by pupils. Some pupils benefit from the programme of vocational education in Years 10 and 11 and they achieve well. However, the majority of pupils in Year 11 do not receive their statutory entitlement to ICT. Improvements in this area are well in hand due to recent effective curriculum leadership and management. Furthermore, improved arrangements for the grouping of pupils according to their prior attainment, is raising standards. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are well provided for. They are well supported in classes and so are able to play a full part in lessons. Some lower attainers are not given appropriate work in science. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
28. Opportunities for enrichment are good, with very good provision for physical education and sport. Large numbers of pupils participate in sport and this very good provision has been recognised with the national 'Sportsmark Gold Award'. The provision for performing arts is not as strong, although it is improving in music. The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities which caters for the interests and needs of all pupils. Most subjects provide additional support for pupils' learning such as homework clubs and additional support for pupils who find work difficult. School visits to the theatre and places of interest and visits abroad significantly extend and support the curriculum, particularly in English, art and design, geography and modern foreign languages. Pupils who were interviewed during the inspection particularly liked the sports clubs, the gardening club and the homework clubs.
29. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation over the past five years, but the scale of the deficiencies was such that much still needs to be done. Recent improvements include the provision of additional specialist art and design rooms, two further ICT rooms, a mathematics room and a new building housing two new laboratories. These improvements

provide much needed specialist accommodation which has improved the quality of learning in the subjects concerned. In addition, a tented 'dome' provides shelter to pupils outside the building during lunch and break times and disabled access is currently being provided throughout the site. Current shortcomings, which have a negative impact on learning, include insufficient specialist accommodation for food technology, music and ICT, four outdated laboratories and a lack of private study facilities for the sixth form. All of these shortcomings remain from the time of the last inspection. Further important shortcomings include a condemned mobile classroom used by pupils with special educational needs, worn and unhygienic work surfaces in the food technology room and a resistant materials room which is too small to be used safely by a full class.

30. Resources remain unsatisfactory as they were at the time of the last inspection. They are very good in physical education and good for pupils with special educational needs. However, the main shortcomings were also issues at the time of the last inspection. These include a lack of musical instruments for class ensemble work and insufficient text books for modern foreign languages. Additional computers have been purchased since the last inspection. There are not enough to support learning in all subjects. Of particular significance is the lack of specialist applications for computer-aided design and manufacture, for composing in music and for data-logging and modelling in science, all of which adversely effect standards in the subject. The shortage of textbooks, which was a concern in many subjects at the last inspection, has been largely overcome by parents purchasing copies for their own children. Teachers and support staff match the demands of the curriculum well overall and very well in the sixth form.

Sixth form

31. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory overall. There is a good range of academic courses, which students value. Provision is particularly good in mathematics, where there are several courses, in English, where there is a strong emphasis on independent learning, and in physical education, where pupils benefit from good facilities and specialist teaching. However, there is a relatively narrow range of non-academic or non-examination courses. For example, only in ICT are there vocational options and there is no general studies option. Although there are plans to offer some religious education in the sixth form, it is not provided at present and this is a breach of statutory requirements.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **good** provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils. Its provision for support, advice and guidance is very good for pupils in the main school and good in the sixth form. The school seeks the views of pupils well in the main school but less so in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school ensures its pupils and students receive very good personal support and guidance.
- Pupils' views in the main school are sought and valued and they are fully involved in setting their own personal and learning targets.
- Very good arrangements exist for pupils joining the school in Year 7.
- Whilst the school has, overall, good arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of pupils, there are areas, which give rise to concerns.
- Some sixth form students feel isolated from the main school.

Commentary

32. Tutors, who generally move with the same group of pupils through the school, get to know their pupils well. Pupils who find it difficult to cope with the demands of school life feel very well supported by the very effective personal adviser. She works closely with those pupils and their families to enable them to get the most out of their time in school. Parents and pupils are very appreciative of the support given and the fact that several, who have left other schools with

- poor behavioural records are beginning to flourish in the school, bears testimony to this. A senior manager takes meticulous care to ensure that needy pupils are supported discreetly.
33. The school council is a very effective means of identifying pupils' views. Meeting monthly, the council considers issues raised by its members who reflect the views expressed by pupils in their particular year group. Pupils feel that their views are listened to and that they can actually get things changed. They also feel fully involved in setting and reviewing their own targets and knew how well they were achieving in terms of national standards and their own capabilities.
 34. The school makes sure that new pupils settle into the school very well. Year 7 teachers and members of the senior management team and the special education needs co-ordinator meet all pupils before they arrive and get to know their individual requirements. Primary pupils visit the school and follow a well-planned programme. During the visit, pupils attend a circle time where they get to know their future classmates. In their first term in the school, pupils attend a residential course which helps them develop good relationships with each other. Meanwhile, parents receive a very good information pack and are able to meet their children's tutors at a special evening during the first term. They are very appreciative of the efforts made by the school to allow their children to settle-in as soon as possible.
 35. The school, in the main, takes great care to ensure the pupils work and play in a safe environment. Detailed health and safety audits are carried out each term and any concerns are raised at a meeting with heads of department and representatives of the senior management team. In addition, the local education authority carries out its own annual audit. Despite all this, however, the inspection team found areas of concern in the technology block, which have been brought to the attention of the governors. Child protection procedures are in place and members of staff are well aware of their responsibilities in this area and the school is very active in promoting a healthy lifestyle for its pupils. It has just had its *Sportsmark Gold* accreditation renewed, in recognition of 'an excellent programme of physical education and school sport' and has also achieved the *Schools for Health* award.
 36. Pupils with special educational needs are very closely involved in the assessment of their own progress. All pupils with statements are invited to attend their annual reviews and those who have individual education plans, work with staff to write their own targets and evaluate their own progress. Learning support assistants act as key tutors to support and monitor progress. Very good links with primary schools ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive very good support based on early identification of their needs.

Sixth form

37. Students overwhelmingly enjoy being at the school and find teachers accessible and helpful, particularly when assessing their work. They receive well-informed and helpful support as they move towards higher education or employment. They have a good and trusting relationship with their tutors and subject teachers. Tutors provide good guidance based on regular reviews of their academic and personal targets. However, a significant number do not feel there is an adult in the school who knows them well or that the school seeks and responds to their views. Discussions with students revealed that they hold the school in high regard but that recent changes in sixth form leadership had left them feeling rather isolated. Many expressed the feeling that some decisions that have a direct impact on their life within the school, are made without seeking and valuing their views. Low attendance at their weekly assembly and irregular contact with their tutors at registration makes the usual lines of communication unreliable.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a **good** relationship with its pupils' parents and carers. Its links with the community are good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are provided with good quality information about the school and about the standards achieved and progress made by their children.
- The learning support department works very closely with parents of pupils for whom it has responsibility.
- The school has developed a range of effective links with the local community.
- Recent staffing reductions have led to some lengthy intervals between formal contacts with some parents.

Commentary

38. The written communications with parents are very informative. The monthly newsletters, in particular, are in a well-presented, readable format and contain details of future events, reports on past ones and reports from different departments. The confirmation list of letters sent home ensures that parents can check if they have all been received. Each department also produces a leaflet which contains its aims, staff names, specialist facilities, features of the different key stages and details of extra-curricular visits and trips. These leaflets provide parents with a good range of information about what is to be studied in each subject. The pupils' progress reports follow a simple format giving parents a clear view of where their children are in terms of where they should be and what they need to do to improve. Formal parents' evenings keep parents updated through the year. However, the suspension of the very good academic review day has meant that some parents, particularly those of pupils in Years 8 and 9, have to wait for almost a year before receiving formal information on their children's progress.
39. The school has extensive links with local sporting clubs across a wide range of sports such as football, badminton, basketball, cricket, golf, netball, rugby, tennis, volleyball, trampolining, canoeing and climbing. Through the art and design department there are numerous links with local museums and art galleries. For example, older pupils have had their automata exhibited in the Victoria Art Gallery while their younger colleagues have produced sculptures for the Bath Festival. Musicians, writers, engineers, artists and representatives of major world religions visit the school to work productively with the pupils. Some very valuable relationships have been developed with local businesses. They help provide work experience for Year 10 pupils and have contributed generously to the school's bid for science college status. They also provide practical support for subject areas. For example, as part of an initiative from the Design Council, a local architect helped pupils with their planning and design while engineers from another company worked on turning the designs into reality. Overall, the school's links with the community do much to improve the learning of pupils in the main school and develop their social skills.
40. The school has a good relationship with its parents who contribute well to the home-school partnership. Most are regular supporters of school functions and respond well to requests of financial support through the school trust fund; they contributed some £20,000 to support the science college bid. However, the school does little on a formal basis to seek the views of parents through regular surveys or consultations. In fact, over a quarter of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, felt their views were not sufficiently sought and valued.
41. The learning support department works very well with parents of all pupils with special educational needs. Arrangements at the school enable parents to have access to the learning support department.

Sixth form

42. Parents of students in Year 12 have opportunities to discuss students' progress in October and April whilst parents of students in Year 13 meet staff in December. These occasions are supported by reports, similar to those in the main school, which are distributed twice a year. The combination of meetings and reports enables parents to understand clearly how well

students are progressing. Students benefit from many of the links with the community that apply to the main school. However, they have not shown much enthusiasm for developing links of their own with, for example, organisations of a charitable or social welfare nature.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is good; governance and management are satisfactory. Recent staff reductions necessitated by a budget deficit have decreased effective management time.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body plays a strategically important role in school developments through senior staff appointments and successful planning.
- The headteacher has high ambitions for the school and, along with a coherent management team, motivates staff well. This has created an inclusive climate throughout the school.
- Clear improvements in recent years, such as the marked rise in English standards, high quality of assessment, ICT provision, effectiveness of teaching assistants and the consistent use of performance data, can be traced through to recruitment, management and development of staff.
- Failure to prepare for changes in funding arrangements has led to a financial deficit, the effects of which are hampering effective management.
- The governing body has not ensured that the curriculum meets statutory requirements, in either the main school or the sixth form.
- Planned development expenditure is not set against predicted budget.

Commentary

43. Leadership and management are satisfactory in so far as they are a balance of recent strengths and some former weaknesses. The leadership provided by the headteacher and key staff is good, and overall, governance and management are satisfactory. The governing body has contributed significantly to recent effective improvements that have restored standards to their former level. The school leadership team has been restructured and prudent financial management has been restored. The school has been awarded specialist status. However, following the last inspection, the consequences of changes in sixth-form funding were not recognised in sufficient time to prevent the school from running into deficit. Nor was effective action taken promptly, consequently, some curricular weaknesses evident at that time, remain. In recent years, the school has been on a path of sustained recovery after a brief but significant decline in standards.
44. The governing body now has a good understanding of the school's performance and the factors that influence it most, so that its priorities are well founded. Governors have a programme of curriculum and performance review that provides an adequate foundation for development planning. However, changes in the arrangements for teaching ICT were too late for their benefits to be felt throughout the main school. Insufficient provision for the teaching of religious education in the sixth form and the continuing absence of a daily act of collective worship, mean that the governing body has not fulfilled its statutory duties in these areas. However, steps to improve provision are well under way and the spiritual development of pupils and students is satisfactory.
45. The headteacher exercises a discreet but effective presence throughout the school, so that understanding of the school's priorities and the means of achieving them are reinforced and supported well. Good support from other key leaders has led to strong teams of staff who work well together in providing for the needs of all pupils. There is a widespread unity of purpose that raises aspirations and has created a very healthy climate both for learning and for personal development.

46. The strengths of senior leaders and managers complement one another well. They fulfil their respective responsibilities purposefully. For example, their monitoring and support for curriculum teams has led to widespread effective use of assessment. They contribute to all major priorities for the school, so setting a good example that is widely recognised by their colleagues. They mentor individual pupils who are most at risk of exclusion from the school, they monitor and intervene effectively to promote good behaviour in classrooms and they undertake a substantial teaching role. Whilst these activities strengthen their understanding and keep the team well involved in core functions, the recent staffing economies have increased the workload to a level where management functions are suffering. For example, inconsistent practices for registering students in the sixth form have gone unremedied. The effectiveness of teachers and assistants is improved through careful analysis of performance and identification of areas for improvement and training. This is followed through into the classroom by appropriate changes in the curriculum and teaching practices. For example, by grouping pupils according to their capabilities and providing consistent structure to lessons, standards of English, where leadership is outstanding, have been rising year on year. Financial planning is prudent and secure but cost of developments are not identified in development plans so expenditure is not readily set against predicted budget.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,082,002
Total expenditure	3,120,105
Expenditure per pupil	3,126

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	14,608
Balance carried forward to the next	-38,102

47. Leadership of the learning support department and language resource base is very strong. It provides a clear sense of what is to be achieved and a determination to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs. The management of teaching assistants is good because there is a strong commitment to their professional development. Procedures are understood and improvements implemented effectively.

Sixth form

48. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Sustained attention to teaching quality and training has enabled standards to remain consistently above average. However, reduced management time, exacerbated by the prolonged absence of a full time co-ordinator, has led to some inefficiencies. For example, attendance is not effectively monitored and tutors are implementing policies inconsistently. As a result, the impact of the very good teaching provided is reduced and some students express a sense of isolation from the school. Teaching practices originating in Years 7 to 9 are now being extended successfully for sixth form students. Funding for the sixth form broadly matches the provision that the school makes although a small imbalance in favour of the main school remains.

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 and French were inspected in full; German was sampled. Standards, in German lessons seen, were above average in both Key Stages. Teaching was effective and pupils were achieving well.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, which is consistently very good, ensures that all pupils achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.
- The exceptionally good leadership of the subject has brought about changes so that standards have risen significantly in the last three years to well above national levels.
- The subject makes insufficient use of ICT.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good	

Leadership of the subject	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Commentary

Tests and examination results

49. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average for all schools and well above the average for schools with similar pupils. After a dip in 2001, results improved steadily, most notably the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels, which has almost doubled in three years. The difference between boys' and girls' results has diminished year by year and boys' results are well above national levels for boys. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 are better in English than in mathematics or science. GCSE English language results in 2003 were above the national average, with all pupils passing and 70 per cent obtaining grades A* to C. Results in English literature were better and were well above the national figure. with eight out of ten pupils gaining grades A* to C. Results, which had declined in 2001 and 2002, improved significantly in 2003. The difference between girls' and boys' attainment is less in literature than it is in English language, where boys' attainment is significantly lower than that of girls.

Standards and achievement

50. Standards on entry in Year 7 are above the national average, with many pupils having reached the higher levels, but there is also a significant proportion who are at the lower levels. The work seen in lessons and an analysis of their work. show that pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 9. Pupils' achievement in their first three years is very good because changes to their courses of study have successfully concentrated on developing language skills. School

data indicates that, on average, pupils progress very much faster than is expected nationally for Years 7 to 9. At GCSE, pupils continue to achieve very well because changes in the choice of examination syllabus, coupled with very good teaching and assessment, help them focus on the skills that they need to succeed. A variety of very effective teaching methods and a range of interesting challenges, motivate pupils to work hard and to develop knowledge and skills to a high level. Evaluation of pupils' achievement indicates that average and lower-attaining pupils make the best progress in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching and learning

51. In seven out of ten lessons seen, teaching was good or better, two lessons were very good and, in one, the teaching and learning were exceptionally good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and skilfully use a range of teaching techniques in lessons that are brisk and challenging. Tasks are carefully planned to develop specific aspects of pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing. Teaching groups are organised effectively so that activities are well matched to the capabilities of the pupils. Aims of lessons are well explained so that pupils know what they have to do. Teachers make clear that they have high expectations and pupils behave well and respond very well, especially as much of the teaching is creative and imaginative. Well-planned lessons include frequent opportunities for both formal and informal checks on progress. For example, comparing work in pairs or giving oral reports of a group's activity, improve pupils' understanding of what is expected. Work is exceptionally well marked and pupils know very accurately the extent to which they met the aims of the lesson and what they need to do to improve. The quality of marking and assessment used to guide pupils is consistently very good across the department. It is an important element in the relationship of trust that exists between teachers and pupils.

Leadership and management

52. Leadership of the subject is outstanding. The curriculum is very good and very well managed. A systematic review of schemes of work, with very good use of national strategies for teaching and literacy, has concentrated on developing specific skills. The benefits are being seen in attainment that is above national standards. Resources are adequate. Reductions in staffing mean that some groups are too big or that the range of ability makes it harder for the teacher to meet the needs of all the pupils. Improved lesson planning has invigorated the teaching of the subject and raised standards well above national levels. Teaching of the subject is consistently very good. The subject does not have good access to ICT but recognises that it could make better use of ICT, through the opportunities offered by the new science college status. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. School-wide literacy training is effective. Good teaching, based on the national guidance for Years 7 to 9, has improved the learning of language skills since the last inspection in all subjects. Key words and ideas are introduced effectively, for example in music, where each unit has its own specialist terms to be learned. Modern foreign languages teach an understanding of grammar. Drama offers opportunities for pupils to express ideas about challenging situations. In science lessons, pupils are required to be very precise in their use of scientific language. Reading is encouraged. At the time of the inspection, a competition was nearing completion, based on a staff 'Big Read' in which teachers encouraged pupils by writing about their favourite novels.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject.
- Teachers use a variety of very good activities to begin their lessons.
- Most lessons have challenge and pace which engage pupils in their learning.
- Assessment procedures are particularly good in Years 7 to 9.
- The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9 as all pupils study two languages.
- Monitoring of some aspects of the subject is not sufficiently rigorous.
- There are insufficient textbooks for use at home and unsatisfactory access to computers.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

54. Both in 2002 and in 2003, teachers' assessments indicate that pupils' performance in French at the end of Year 9 was above the nationally expected level. In both years, the GCSE results were just above the national average. Girls performed better than boys in both years but, in 2003, the boys were well above the national average for boys and the gap between girls and boys had narrowed.

Standards and achievement

55. By the end of Year 9, pupils have reached a good level in their command of French. They are able to use the language to express their feelings and can describe past and future events. They also have good pronunciation patterns and can work confidently with computers. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very competent language learners. Both their written and their spoken French are of a good standard. In a Year 11 class, pupils were able to construct questions and put them to each other and their teacher, in French. In a Year 10 class, even the least confident pupils could perform a role-play in French.

Teaching and learning

56. Teaching in the department is never less than satisfactory, with some very good practice. The most effective teaching is characterised by imaginative beginnings, which capture the pupils' interest, such as a game or a song. Clear objectives are then shared with pupils so that they have a good understanding of what is expected of them. Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject and fairly consistent use of French, enable pupils to make good progress. The variety of activities on offer and the pace of lessons mean the pupils are challenged and remain motivated in almost every lesson. Where the teacher does not ensure that pupils are actively involved and where they are not expected to look back on their learning, or to reinforce their understanding, their learning is insecure. Assessment procedures are rigorous and teachers

apply them well so they are very helpful to pupils. They know and understand the level at which they are performing and they know exactly how to improve.

Leadership and management

57. The acting head of department has made good progress in a very short period of time, building on well-established procedures and ensuring that good use is made of the accommodation and the resources available. Teachers are well matched to the curriculum, although the department would undoubtedly benefit from the re-introduction of foreign language assistants to support them. Teachers are all committed to improving the quality of their work and raising standards. They have, for example, made good progress in following the latest guidance in Years 7 to 9. Modern foreign languages became optional for the current Year 10, anticipating the new arrangements that will apply from next year. Over half of the pupils in each year group have chosen to continue their language studies to GCSE, with a very small number of dual linguists in each year. The attainment of different groups, notably boys and girls, is not monitored and some of the schemes of work are out-dated. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection, notably in the use of ICT.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment at all levels is consistently above national standards.
- Pupils develop good investigative skills and the capacity to work collaboratively and independently.
- Good quality teaching promotes enthusiastic learning.
- Good leadership and management support the good team spirit evident in the department.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT in pupils' learning.
- Good teaching methods include the regular use of mental and oral work.
- There is not sufficient sharing of good teaching practice.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Tests and examination results

58. In 2003, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average for all schools and in line with the average for similar schools. Boys reached marginally higher standards than girls. Results in mathematics were similar to those in science but slightly below those in English. Over the past four years, results have been consistently above the national average. GCSE results for Year 11 were above the national average for boys and girls. More than fifteen per cent attained the highest grades compared with ten per cent nationally. The results compare satisfactorily with those in other subjects.

Standards and achievement

59. Pupils enter the school with average knowledge and understanding of number, shape and information handling. The work seen of pupils in Years 7 to 9 shows that good progress has been made in developing basic skills and applying them to problem solving. Pupils are encouraged to investigate problems and to form their own conclusions. Consequently, deductive skills develop well and overall achievement is good. Pupils are well prepared for the GCSE course and continue to make good progress and to achieve well. Pupils are arranged in classes based upon prior attainment and this enables all pupils to work at their own pace. Higher-attaining pupils are set realistic but imaginative tasks and many develop an enthusiasm for solving problems that augurs well for advanced mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from working in smaller groups and from extra individual support when staffing arrangements allow. The achievement of all groups is good.

Teaching and learning

60. In all lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better. In four out of every five lessons, teaching was good or very good. Pupils respond well to good teaching and most are eager to learn, although some pupils in Year 7 are occasionally inattentive when the work set is not matched to their needs. All lessons begin with mental work that is brisk and demanding and prepares pupils well for the work that follows. Teachers make very good use of the interactive whiteboard, which lends great clarity to teaching and fires pupils' enthusiasm. Teachers are knowledgeable and have a clear idea of the pattern of mathematics teaching that leads pupils all the way to A-level study. Thus, pupils are usually stimulated by the work and they set about it with vigour. For example, Year 11 pupils, during the space of one lesson, made conical paper hats of differing heights and circumferences, revising all the while their knowledge of circle measurement. Good collaborative work ensued. Pupils in Year 8 were challenged to form hypotheses from numerical data to deduce whether boys had better memories than girls and this produced animated discussion in collaborative groups. Homework is well used to support class work. All work is positively marked and assessments recorded. Teachers are keenly aware of what pupils know, understand and can do, and are building up a bank of assessment material that leads to good lesson planning. Relationships are good and based upon mutual respect. Pupils in Year 7 steadily learn what is expected of them and respond well.

Leadership and management

61. The department is well led and managed. Teachers are very experienced and work with the common purpose of seeking to maintain and improve upon good standards. Teaching is monitored and evaluated but there is little follow up so that the best practice is not shared. The current guidance on teaching pupils in Years 7 to 9 has been soundly implemented and is making a positive impact upon results. Group and individual targets are set for all pupils and their achievement is carefully monitored. The department met its targets in 2003. A good record of achievement has been maintained since the previous inspection. ICT is underused but its development is part of the department's development plan.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. The department is developing a policy for numeracy across the curriculum that will ultimately provide a broader base of support for pupils' learning than at present. However, most pupils are numerate and use their skills well in other subjects. For example, pupils use their knowledge of co-ordinates to read Ordnance Survey maps in geography. In ICT, pupils are able to construct and interpret a database and in design and technology, pupils use their understanding of number and shape to produce design briefs. Pupils acquire a good understanding of data collection and graphs in mathematics lessons and successfully apply this knowledge to a wide range of subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above the national average.
- Teachers make good use of their knowledge of the subject to develop students' understanding of scientific ideas.
- Students respond well when presented with challenging activities.
- The head of department has a clear understanding of how to improve standards.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation is having an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The courses provided in Years 10 and 11 are not appropriate for all students.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Tests and examination results

63. Although results at the end of Year 9 in the national tests in 2003 declined slightly, they remained above average when compared with similar schools. Results showed an improvement in relation to students' prior attainment. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2003 were above average overall. Twelve per cent of students took separate chemistry, physics and biology examinations, whilst the remainder were entered for double award science. Results in the separate sciences were well above average, with the majority of students gaining A* or A grades. In double award science, standards were above average, with girls attaining higher scores than boys.

Standards and achievement

64. By the end of Year 9, students have a good knowledge of key scientific concepts. They consolidate their understanding well as a result of effective teaching. Students make good use of their prior knowledge to tackle new situations, except that sometimes they fail to make good links between different aspects. By the end of Year 11, most students carry out investigations confidently and demonstrate good understanding. Many of them have good skills in ICT, which they use effectively to analyse experimental results. Students taking the three separate sciences respond confidently in lessons and apply themselves very well to challenging activities. However, some students in the lower sets in Years 10 and 11 find the work difficult. As a result, they become disheartened and lose interest. This particularly applies to boys, who find the work too abstract. Because of this they do not achieve as well as the girls. At present, the courses on offer do not meet adequately all the needs of these students. The majority of students work hard and are keen to learn. However, some in Years 7 and 8 do not listen well and fall behind in lessons. They work slowly unless directly involved with the teacher. By the end of Year 11, however, most students have good independent learning skills and are able to tackle problems well on their own.

Teaching and learning

65. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection and some lessons were very good or excellent. In the majority of lessons, teaching is well planned and enthusiastically delivered. Teachers use their knowledge and skills well to promote an understanding and interest in science. Activities are varied and adapted well to individual needs. This was apparent when gifted and talented students in Years 10 and 11 responded very well to challenging levels of scientific enquiry. Where lessons were not so successful, this resulted mainly from inexperienced teachers not yet having the skills to promote learning effectively. In some cases, they failed to recognise that students were unclear about what they had to do and the pace of the lesson was slow. Occasionally, teachers did not actively involve students enough or provide sufficient opportunities for them to work independently. The latest national guidance for teaching Years 7 to 9 is being followed well to broaden students' thinking skills, although the activities at the beginning and end of lessons do not extend learning or excite students' curiosity enough.
66. The technicians contribute significantly to the quality of teaching and learning but they have too little time for a school of this size. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and is having a negative effect on standards. The laboratories are spread across the school site, making technical support difficult and requiring costly duplication of resources. Some of the rooms are in need of refurbishment.

Leadership and management

67. Although the current head of department has been in post for just a short time, standards are already rising. He has increased the profile of the subject among students and provides a good role model for other staff. Teachers and technicians work effectively together. The head of science and the other two subject leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the department and share a very clear vision for future improvements. However, the impact of recent initiatives needs further evaluation so that limitations are fully recognised and good practice shared better.
68. There has been good progress made since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved, resulting in better achievement, particularly among girls. Monitoring and evaluation are now more effective. Resources have improved and there is a good supply of textbooks for Years 7 to 9. However, the shortage of computers in the department limits the opportunities for students and teachers to use ICT well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good progress is made in the subject since the arrival of the new subject leader.
- Standards are improving for those following the new vocational GCSE course.
- There is good teaching by staff who regularly teach ICT.
- Very good course materials and guidance developed for teachers and pupils are readily accessible on the school's 'intranet' system.
- The very good assessment system helps pupils and teachers to track progress and identify where pupils need to improve.
- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements.
- Unsatisfactory progress is made by the majority of pupils in Year 11.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Unsatisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

69. In 2003, the standards achieved by the end of Year 9 were above nationally expected levels. This represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection. The standards achieved by those pupils who chose to take a GCSE course in 2003 were above average and the number achieving an 'A' grade was well above average. However, the school did not provide a co-ordinated programme, which addressed the National Curriculum requirements. Consequently, the standard that pupils achieved by the end of Year 11 was below national expectations, as it was at the last inspection.

Standards and achievement

70. Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards and with particular strengths in presenting their ideas and using computers to search for information. The work of pupils up to Year 9 indicates that they achieve well and make good progress over their first three years in the school. The new policy of starting a GCSE course in Year 9 is beginning to raise standards further. The pupils who took their GCSE examination last year, generally started Year 10 with average standards and made good progress to do as well as they did. The majority of students in Years 10 and 11 have some opportunities to use ICT in subjects. However, this varies considerably and teachers rarely provide opportunities to achieve the standard and range of expertise required. Consequently, achievement overall in Year 11 is unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

71. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 ranges from unsatisfactory to good. Lessons are mainly taught by staff who regularly teach ICT and are developing good knowledge and skills in the subject. Here, the teaching is good. However, where teachers are less experienced, tasks are often less challenging and teachers have difficulties motivating pupils, some of whom lose interest and misbehave. In the GCSE course, teaching and learning are consistently good and sometimes it is very good as teachers are more experienced. Courses are very well planned and lessons have good pace and build well on previous learning. The pupils are very clear about what is expected of them and appreciate the good individual support and feedback provided by teachers.

Leadership and management

72. The subject is currently very well lead and managed by the new subject leader who has already had a major impact on standards and the quality of teaching. This has been achieved mainly through very well-planned courses and very good support for teachers. Also the pupils' progress is now well monitored and teaching adapted to address pupils' needs. On-line materials for teachers and pupils have been a central feature of recent developments. This helps teachers and pupils to clarify what is required and ensures that the pupils know what they need to do to reach their target grades when they begin each task. There is a clear vision for the subject and effective plans are in place, particularly to address shortcomings at Key

Stage 4. However, insufficient progress was made in the years directly after the last inspection, which has been to the detriment of those currently in Key Stage 4.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. The use of ICT to support learning in subjects across the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils develop a good range of expertise in Years 7 to 9 and are confident and able to use ICT to support other subjects in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities to do so vary significantly between subjects and teachers, but good use is to be found, particularly in geography, history, French, German and design and technology. Some use is also made of ICT in science, but the lack of equipment for specialist applications limits opportunities whilst, in design and technology and music, it limits the standards the pupils achieve in the subject. Suites of computers have recently been provided for the use of classes and small groups in some subjects. However, more computer equipment and specialist software is required to ensure appropriate support for learning in all the subjects.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in response to good teaching.
- Standards are above average, by the ages of both fourteen and sixteen.
- A strong emphasis on active and independent learning contributes well to the good progress.
- There is good leadership and management of an improving department.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

74. The 2003 teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 showed that standards overall were below the national average. The percentage of boys reaching the expected level was below that of girls, whose results were broadly average. Standards were higher in 2002. The percentage of Year 11 pupils gaining an A* to C grade in the 2003 GCSE examinations was above the national average, with boys and girls doing equally well, and these results were in line with the trend for previous years.

Standards and achievement

75. Pupils in both Years 9 and 11 attain standards above national expectations both in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and in their skills of analysing and evaluating historical evidence. The majority of pupils communicate their knowledge effectively both orally and in writing. This represents good achievement for pupils of all ages and abilities, including

those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 make more rapid progress than those in Year 7. The department's recent policy for raising boys' motivation and achievement has successfully narrowed the gap between standards achieved by boys and girls.

Teaching and learning

76. Teaching and learning are good for pupils of all ages. A particular strength is the emphasis teachers give to pupils learning actively and independently. This is seen in lessons when pupils question each other and assess each other's work, so that they work independently of the teacher. Teachers use ICT consistently well to motivate pupils. Classroom management is very effective in sustaining a strong working ethos throughout lessons, so that pupils learn well and are productive. Assessment is used well, particularly in Year 11 lessons, where teachers give pupils a clear understanding of how they can obtain the highest grades in examinations.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has worked hard to develop aspects such as ICT, has reviewed progress constructively and has taken effective steps to raise the achievement of boys. There is a limited amount of extra-curricular activities outside lessons. Good progress since the previous inspection has seen good standards maintained and improvements in achievement, staffing, resources and the use ICT.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and very good teaching and learning lead to above average standards and good achievement.
- Very effective planning and a wide range of teaching methods result in good learning.
- Very good programme of fieldwork and effective use of ICT greatly enrich the curriculum.
- Tasks set in lessons do not always meet the full range of pupils' needs.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

78. The 2003 teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 showed that standards overall were close to national average. The percentage of boys reaching the expected level was below that of girls, whose results were broadly above average. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average and higher than they were in 2002. These pupils achieved well, with girls achieving particularly well. Pupils generally achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

Standards and achievement

79. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are making very good progress. They have the necessary geographical vocabulary and knowledge to complete their work successfully. Lower-attaining pupils have a basic understanding of physical processes connected with the weather and have developed a sound knowledge of the European Union. Pupils gain sufficient knowledge for their case studies and their understanding of themes and conceptual models is good. Pupils make very good gains in the use of geographical skills, such as drawing graphs, analysing data, using statistics and interpreting photographs. They develop sound mapwork skills in Year 7. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have good knowledge about the tropical rainforest and Brazil. They also have a good understanding of themes, such as eco-systems and environmental protection. Pupils in Year 9 are able to give very considered views on environmental issues connected with national parks in the United Kingdom. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress and good progress when supported by learning assistants.

Teaching and learning

80. Teaching is sound in Year 7, good in Years 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In Year 7 non-specialist teachers successfully follow departmental plans. In Years 8 and 9, teachers use a wide range of interesting methods to motivate and engage pupils' interest. Teachers make very good use of fieldwork and ICT to enrich the curriculum for pupils. In several lessons, teachers used a data projector and *Powerpoint* slides very effectively to illustrate places, statistics and graphs. Teachers give very good structured guidance to pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, about what to expect in course modules, coursework, fieldwork and examinations. Very good assessment of pupils' work allows pupils to understand exactly where they are and what they need to do in order to improve. Assessment methods also develop pupils' own understanding of how to improve their work. Lessons clearly build on previous work by extending pupils' understanding of ideas and concepts. In some lessons, the tasks set are not appropriate for the pupils with special educational needs or for the most able pupils, and not enough use is made of the department's stock of GCSE Ordnance Survey map extracts to illustrate themes, such as rivers, coasts or settlements. Pupils respond positively to the interesting range of activities provided and many pupils take a great deal of time and care with their classwork and homework. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and standards of work and have very good rapport with pupils.

Leadership and management

81. The subject leader effectively supports and encourages the very good teaching found in the subject. The department has introduced and developed the new assessment system, which is having a positive impact on pupils' understanding of the subject. The teachers make very good use of ICT to enrich the pupils' learning. Resources and planning for courses are very well organised and contribute to the good quality of teaching and learning. The teachers work well as a team and incorporate new ideas and strategies into their teaching.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and leads to good achievement by all groups of pupils.
- All pupils in the current Year 10 now study religious education at GCSE level.
- Good use is made of ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers need to involve more pupils in question and answer sessions.
- Time allocation in Years 7 to 9 is still below recommended levels.
- Resources are barely adequate.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

82. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, showed a greater proportion of girls reached the expected levels than boys. In 2002 and 2003, standards in GCSE were above average. However, the pupils involved had opted to take the subject and the majority of pupils did not study religious education as a separate subject in Years 10 and 11.

Standards and achievement

83. Standards are above average at the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement because pupils enter the school with average knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. The school has now introduced religious education as a compulsory subject for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. This arrangement has begun with the current Year 10 pupils, who all began studying a short GCSE course at the end of Year 9. Although the current Year 11 pupils have not had this opportunity, the situation will have rectified itself by next year. Standards of the current Year 10 pupils are above average. Standards of those pupils opting to take the full course in Year 11 are also above average. Achievement of all groups of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good and pupils of all abilities make good gains in their knowledge and understanding, building on the work they have done previously. However, the time allocation in Years 7 to 9 is below average, which means that pupils and teachers have to work very hard to maintain these levels of good achievement throughout.

Teaching and learning

84. Teaching is good overall. Teachers, who are all specialists, are enthusiastic and committed to raising standards. They make use of a good range of strategies and resources to ensure that pupils are engaged in and motivated by tasks set. In order to help Year 11 pupils consider the concepts of free will and predestination, for example, the teacher made use of horoscopes and clips of several films, including 'Sliding Doors'. This means that pupils were better able to understand these difficult ideas. Some very good practice was seen with lower-attaining Year 8 pupils. The teacher challenged and stretched them so that they all worked to their full potential when deciding on the most important characteristics needed by a vicar. In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning still further, teachers need to involve more pupils in question and answer sessions and in discussions so that learning can be reinforced and challenged. Some lessons need a faster, crisper start, so that pupils can focus quickly on the tasks ahead. Although displays in the classrooms are impressive in terms of pupils' work and other materials, it would be useful if key words are emphasised more in both display and on the board.

Leadership and management

85. Leadership is purposefully set on course to raise standards and improve the subject generally. Management of the subject is good. Procedures are clear, non-bureaucratic and supportive. Morale is high and improvement since the last inspection is good. Resources, in terms of textbooks and artefacts are barely adequate to support the curriculum and visits to places of worship are too infrequent. Overhead projectors are old and ineffective. Good use is made, however, of ICT in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are beginning to make good use of assessment in their teaching and planning. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The course in resistant materials was inspected in full and provision for food technology was sampled. In the food technology lessons seen, teaching was good and, in one case, very good. Standards of work seen were at least in line with national expectations and were often above. Assessment procedures are well used to enable teachers to monitor progress and pupils to see how they can improve.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in Year 11.
- Very good assessment systems help pupils and teachers track progress and identify where pupils need to improve.
- Pupils have good knowledge of the subject and of standards of manufacture.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to design and develop their own ideas in Years 7 to 9.
- There is a lack of equipment for computer-aided manufacture.
- The crowded conditions in some practical rooms create health and safety risks.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

86. The 2003, design and technology assessments of pupils in Year 9 showed that standards overall were broadly in line with national expectations. The percentage of boys reaching the expected level was below that of girls, whose results were well above average. In 2003, the pupils achieved standards in their GCSE examinations which were below the national average for the subject. This is in contrast to previous years, when standards have been above average.

Standards and achievement

87. By the end of Year 9, the standards that pupils achieve in resistant materials are above average in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and in manufacturing. However,

their ability to use these skills to design products is below average. Overall, they make satisfactory progress.

88. The pupils who took their GCSE in resistant materials last summer did less well than in their other subjects but this was typical of the national picture. Despite a change of teacher at the beginning of the year, the pupils currently in Year 11 are making good progress and should achieve above average standards by the end of their course. They have a good understanding of the subject and develop the detail of their design ideas well through three-dimensional modelling. They particularly enjoy manufacturing and work confidently and to good standards. Pupils have limited experience of computer-aided design and manufacture and their ability in this aspect of the subject is below the national expectations.

Teaching and learning

89. The teachers are experienced and have good expertise in the subject. Their lessons are well organised and their clear expectations are explained and demonstrated well to the pupils. Consequently, the pupils are confident and enjoy their success. Teaching in lessons in Years 7 to 9 is always satisfactory and often good. In Year 7, the pupils enjoy a good range of introductory projects, which swiftly raise their confidence to work in a wide range of resistant materials. However, their independence is not further developed as most activities focus on the pupils all making similar products, with few opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their own ideas.
90. The pupils who sat the GCSE examinations in resistant materials last year had a change of teacher partway through the course, which adversely effected their progress. However, the similar disruption caused to the current Year 11 group is being successfully addressed through the very good teaching, planning and catch up strategies employed by their present teacher. Teachers use the very good assessment system well to track pupils' progress and identify where pupils need to improve. It is being particularly well used to raise the standards of the pupils' coursework in Year 11.

Leadership and management

91. The recent changes in personnel have hindered progress in the subject, as staff with key skills have left. However, the department now has a team of good practitioners who are working well with the subject leader to ensure previous high standards are re-established. The new computers are being increasingly well used to support learning and current staff training will enable teachers to make greater use of computer-aided design in lessons. However, resources for computer-aided manufacture and aspects of systems and control are currently unsatisfactory and limit development in these areas. Significant safety hazards are caused by overcrowding in the relatively small workshop areas. This needs to be urgently addressed.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected in full and drama was sampled. In one drama lesson, teaching and learning were satisfactory and, in two, they were good. Some outstanding coursework from Year 10 pupils was seen in the scrutiny of pupils' work. Drama makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skilled teachers create an ethos for learning that frequently results in high-quality work.
- A thorough assessment structure ensures that pupils know how well they are doing.

- The GCSE course is well designed to foster independent learning skills that develop creativity and result in a high proportion of pupils achieving top grades.
- Supportive extra-curricular activities, particularly at GCSE level, directly impact on pupils' achievement.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Very Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

92. Pupils start their art and design course with average standards. By the end of Year 9, they have shown significant improvement. Results in GCSE in 2003 were well above national averages, with over 80 per cent of pupils achieving the high grades of A* to C. Boys and girls were equally successful. Results in art and design compare well with other subjects and have been consistently high in recent years.

Standards and achievement

93. By the end of Year 9, pupils have made good progress in developing a mature approach to the subject. They can record and develop ideas in a selection of two and three-dimensional media. Most are particularly skilled in drawing and painting. They have an understanding of such artistic concepts as line, colour, tone and texture, and a sound knowledge of a selection of artists and art culture. They can talk about their own work and have had some experience of expressing opinions on the work of others. By the end of Year 11, pupils have made remarkable progress in perfecting their practical and research skills. Most pupils are able to express their individuality with great confidence, often emphasised by the sheer scale of their final work. All pupils work to their capacity and those with special educational needs are offered additional support in lessons.

Teaching and learning

94. Teaching is always satisfactory and usually good or very good. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject, which they enthusiastically transmit to the majority of their pupils. A series of carefully selected projects, each presented to enhance skills in research and development, are linked to appropriate artists or periods of art. This ensures that each aspect of the National Curriculum is explored at appropriate levels and built upon each year. In this way, pupils grow in confidence, even if their natural ability in the subject is limited. This confidence is reinforced by a very positive assessment system that sets individual targets, includes a self-assessment process that links to National Curriculum levels, and is supported by positive marking. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and what to do next to improve further. Most pupils enjoy art and design and they are keen to participate in classroom questioning, a feature not used to best advantage by all teachers. Many pupils can sustain concentration for long periods of time. A few younger pupils require closer management to maintain their interest and progress. Pupils record their work in sketchpads that serve as both a record of their research and a source of information for future work.

Leadership and management

95. The head of department has a clear sense of direction for the department, and with colleagues' help, continually refines activities to respond to his analysis of pupils' achievement. This is evident in the recently reviewed departmental action plan. All the issues raised in the last inspection report have been addressed well.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and lead to good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers use the department's well-developed assessment systems to inform their planning of work in Years 7 to 9.
- Leadership of the department is good.
- Singing and extra-curricular work are areas for development within the department.
- Accommodation and resources, particularly for ICT, are unsatisfactory.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

96. Results in teachers' assessments in 2003 for Year 9 were average when compared with similar schools. Girls achieved better than boys. Four out of five pupils gained a grade of A* to C in GCSE examinations.

Standards and achievement

97. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average, especially in performing and composing skills. They make good progress from Years 7 to 9, so that, by the end of Year 9, they are achieving the expected levels of attainment. Pupils are quickly engaged in lessons by starter activities. Year 9 pupils show good understanding of musical vocabulary and satisfactory performing and composing skills. Inadequate accommodation and the lack of instruments limit the range of activities classes are able to undertake. Consequently, pupils' experience of singing or playing is too limited. The department lacks computers with which to develop and enrich pupils' work, especially in Years 7 to 9. Standards in Year 11 are above average and pupils make good progress from Year 10. Pupils in Year 11 can successfully answer questions on reggae music, with good knowledge of instrumentation, chords and riffs. They competently perform arrangements of reggae melodies in groups.

Teaching and learning

98. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and, in the better lessons, high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. These qualities, together with the brisk pace, keep pupils working effectively. Assessment is very good. Very good use is made of National Curriculum levels of attainment, adapted for each unit of work, to help pupils assess their own and others' performances and compositions. Pupils write clear evaluations of their work, using these levels, and teachers share their assessments with the pupils so that effective targets are identified. All lessons have clear objectives and each task is modified to suit pupils' abilities, although more work needs to be done to identify explicitly what the least and the most able pupils will achieve in each task. Schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 are well developed and contribute well to pupils' understanding of different music and culture around the world.

Leadership and management

99. A great deal of work has been done in Years 7 to 9 to develop good schemes of work and effective strategies for assessment. The closer monitoring of instrumental staff who visit the school and the development of extra-curricular music are areas for development, as is the inclusion of regular whole-class performances in Years 7 to 9. Improvement since the last inspection is only satisfactory, as the accommodation is still unsatisfactory due to the lack of a second specialist room. Resources are inadequate with the almost complete absence of ICT in the department and lack of classroom instruments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and well above average in GCSE examinations because of good teaching.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and have very good attitudes to learning. In some lessons attitudes are excellent.
- Students have very good opportunities to take part in and achieve high standards in sport, through the very good range of extra-curricular activities offered.
- The procedures for assessing and recording pupils' achievements are good although they have not yet been applied to Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment information is not sufficiently well analysed and teachers' assessments are not secure in Years 7 to 9.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessments and examination results

100. In 2003, results in the statutory teachers' assessments for Year 9 were well above the national average. GCSE results were well above the national average as they have been consistently in recent years. Girls achieved higher standards than boys.

Standards and achievement

101. Standards of work seen during the inspection correspond well with examination results but not with the very high numbers judged by teachers to be meeting national expectations by the end of Year 9. This is mainly because teachers' assessments are not secure and pupils' ability to analyse and evaluate is not of the same high standard as their performance. All pupils are achieving well. They develop their skills and apply them appropriately to new situations. For example, they have successfully adapted their gymnastics skills to the sport of trampolining. All pupils have a good knowledge of the games they play so that, by Year 11, they are confident and competent games players. Older pupils are beginning to take greater responsibility for their learning. This was shown well in a Year 10 girls' netball lesson where the pupils showed good knowledge of the game and a high level of maturity and co-operation when organising themselves in squads for a tournament. More typically, however, pupils' ability to analyse and evaluate is not of the same high standard as their performance. Older pupils are developing a sound understanding of the components of fitness and can devise simple training programmes. Standards in dance and gymnastics are not as high as those in games because less time is given to these areas of activity. This is particularly the case for boys who do not have the opportunity to cover this area of activity in Year 9.

Teaching and learning

102. The majority of lessons observed were good. Teachers give good explanations about the work to be covered and thoroughly revise what has been covered in previous lessons. They enthuse pupils about the subject. Consequently, pupils have extremely positive attitudes, they know what is expected of them, they respond quickly and organise themselves well. These very positive attitudes to the subject are a significant factor in the above average standards achieved. When the teacher is explicit about what pupils should achieve by the end of the lesson, this helps both the teacher and pupils assess progress at the end of the lesson. For example, in a Year 7 boys' soccer lesson, the teacher made it clear that everyone would be expected to perform at least one type of turn in a game, by the end of the lesson. More generally, learning outcomes for the lesson are not specific enough. Teachers observe well and give helpful feedback, which enables pupils to improve their performance but generally, the quality of assessment is not as secure as other aspects of teaching. When pupils are given structured opportunities to evaluate and analyse performance, they respond well and show they have previously underdeveloped abilities in this area. Too frequently, the teachers tackle this aspect in too general a way and pupils struggle to give specific detail in their responses.

Leadership and management

103. The clear, well-established policy is based on high expectations of the pupils and a dynamic drive to encourage participation in sport. All members of the department reflect this enthusiasm. Assessment procedures have been developed significantly since the last inspection but further work is needed. Extra-curricular provision is very good, providing well for all pupils and offering extension opportunities for more able pupils. This has been recognised by the award of the national 'Sports Mark Gold' to the school. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

104. Vocational ICT was inspected in full and is reported paragraphs 69 to 72. Business studies and childcare were sampled. In the business studies lesson seen, teaching was well structured and pupils learned effectively. Childcare is provided in collaboration with Bath College. In the lesson seen, good teaching captured and sustained pupils' interest so that they learned to provide care for a newborn baby and achieved well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

105. Personal, social and health education is taught mainly for one lesson every two weeks so was sampled. Two lessons of *Education for life* for Year 10 were seen, both of which were very good, dealing very well with sensitive personal issues.

106. Citizenship is taught as part of the personal, social and health education programme in one lesson every two weeks. Allocation of time, therefore, hampers the development of this subject, although aspects of citizenship are covered by philosophy and ethics lessons and assemblies and in preparation for the elections to the 'Youth Parliament' that took place during the week of the inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English literature	10	100	98	80.0	45	100	84.5
English language	9	100	n/a	33.3	n/a	82.2	n/a
French	3	100	97	33.3	58	80	90.5
German	7	100	97	14.3	56	68.6	88.8
mathematics	22	95.5	95	68.2	59	98.2	100.2
biology	19	100	93	42.1	42	84.2	78.9
chemistry	12	100	95	58.3	36	95	86.6
physics	11	90.9	94	54.5	48	89.1	82.9
information and communication technology (VCE)	13	100	82.2	69.2	22.4	101.5	60.9
history	13	100	98	69.2	50	100	86.2
geography	15	93.3	98	66.7	50	90.7	86.1
design and technology	6	100	96.3	33.3	36.5	77.1	78.0
art and design	5	100	97	40.0	51	76	86.4
music	6	100	97	83.3	55	110	82.6
physical education	13	100	95	61.5	31	90.8	74.3
economics	6	100	98.0	50.0	57.6	93.3	91.0

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English literature	3	100	93.4	66	32.6	53.3	37.1
English language	3	100	n/a	33	n/a	43.3	n/a
French	2	50	88.4	0	39.7	10	37.2
mathematics	1	100	76.8	0	36.0	20	32.6
biology	3	100	79.5	0	30.2	30	31.4
chemistry	3	100	84.0	66	36.5	46.6	34.8
physics	4	100	82.2	0	36.3	32.5	34.2
history	6	100	91.5	66	37.8	45	37.8
geography	1	100	89.0	100	38.2	60	37.0

art and design	1	100	87.4	100	38.1	60	36.7
music	3	100	89.4	100	35.2	56.6	36.5
physical education	1	100	86.1	0	26.3	40	32.4
further mathematics	5	100	n/a	80	n/a	52	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English was inspected in full and French was sampled. Standards in French are in line with national expectations and students' achievement is satisfactory. A and AS-level results in 2003 were below average, as they were in German.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good knowledge of the subject support very effective teaching and this helps students to achieve very well.
- Examination results in English literature are very high.
- Outstanding leadership of the subject is leading the development of teaching and learning.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Excellent
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Commentary

Examination results

107. In 2003, A-level results in English literature were very high, with eight of the ten candidates attaining A or B grades. Results in English language were broadly average. The results in English language have shown a small but steady improvement over time but the results in English literature have shown considerable improvement over the last two years, from already high levels. Results at AS-level are average for English language and high for English literature, with all students passing and two-thirds obtaining the higher grades A or B.

Standards and achievement

108. Overall standards on entry to the sixth form are above average although a significant proportion of students have moderate attainment at GCSE. English literature attracts a higher proportion of higher-attaining students than the English language course. Lesson observations and an analysis of their work confirm that students on both courses achieve very well in Year 12 in relation to their prior attainment. The proportion of students staying on to Year 13 is high and they continue to achieve well. In conversation, students recognised how strongly the subject had contributed to their personal development and were grateful for the good teaching and relationships, which had helped them to make academic and personal progress.

Teaching and learning

109. In all of the lessons inspected, the teaching was very good, with some aspects that were excellent. An issue at the last inspection, concerning limited opportunities for individual learning, has been very successfully resolved. Students were seen to negotiate tasks and to take responsibility for their work. Research for a 'Comparative Study' and preparation for a synoptic examination involve students in a lot of private wider reading and they confirmed that they enjoyed this independence and responsibility. Students use the Internet for research, for example comparing critical views or looking for information about the social and cultural background of texts studied. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject and prepare lessons very thoroughly. They use a very good range of teaching skills very effectively to engage students and to develop extensive personal responses. High quality discussions are complemented by the very good teaching of essay-writing skills and result in very high quality written assignments. Some of the assignments seen in the scrutiny of students' work were outstanding and would merit the highest grades at GCE Advanced level. Students enjoy the high quality of the teaching and learning, which promote their excellent response and very good achievement in the subject.

Leadership and management

110. The leadership of the subject is excellent. The curriculum is very good. Courses have been developed, which challenge students and allow them to use their growing knowledge and skills to best advantage. Management of the subject is very good and a strong team of able teachers is well deployed. Resources and accommodation are adequate but a class of 24 students in Year 12 is too big. The subject has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Numbers have increased. Teaching has improved and standards, particularly in English literature, have continued to rise.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

111. The literacy skills of sixth form students are very good overall and develop very well in Years 12 and 13. An awareness of the importance of language skills was a good feature of the teaching and learning in many subjects. In all of the subjects inspected, teachers introduced appropriate vocabulary very effectively. For example, in biology, the teacher explained how complex names originated from recognisable roots. Speaking and listening skills are developing well in all subjects, through discussion work and through very effective use of question and answer. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in developing research and independent reading skills in many subjects, for example history, theatre studies and English. In discussion, students were pleased with their language development as part of their academic and personal achievement.

MATHEMATICS

The department offers a combination of modules to students in Year 12 and 13 which can lead to qualifications ranging from a single AS-level through to two A-levels in mathematics and further mathematics. This whole provision was the focus of the inspection.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attainment is above average and achievement is very good as the result of very motivating and skilful teaching.
- Teaching and learning are particularly effective because of the team spirit, great experience and teachers' excellent knowledge of the subject.
- Recruitment and retention in the subject are high because students enjoy the supportive learning environment in the department.

- The reduced time allocation for A level and the limited time given to further mathematics teaching are likely to affect standards.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Good

Commentary

Examination results

112. The proportions of students achieving A and B grades in the AS, A-level and further mathematics examinations in 2003 were well above the national averages. This represented a continuation of the generally high standards established in past years. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. The subject performs well compared to other curriculum areas.

Standards and achievement

113. The majority of students enter their course with high GCSE grades. They sustain these standards and achieve very well. They find algebraic manipulation difficult at first but gradually manage to handle it during Year 12. Most students are able to use their GCSE skills with confidence. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson solving a trigonometric identity and in differential calculus in a Year 12 lesson. Numeracy skills are generally good. Very good use is made of ICT in pure mathematics and statistics coursework. Some of these investigations involving numerical methods, such as the Newton-Raphson equation were of an extremely high standard. Students value the excellent relationships and dedicated support of their teachers. They enjoy learning and using mathematics.

Teaching and learning

114. In all lessons seen, teaching and learning were very good. In general, teachers' knowledge of the subject and their wide experience are major factors in this. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm readily to students. They make good use of resources. Effective use was seen of the interactive whiteboard and students reported successful use of graphical calculators and graph-plotting software. Further mathematics groups take considerable responsibility for their own learning because their time allocation is very small and the cut in taught time for A-level classes will inevitably have an adverse effect on teaching and learning.

Leadership and management

115. The head of department, who has been in post for only one term, leads her team well. Many of the very experienced teaching team hold additional important management posts within the school. Good use is made of assessment data and students know how to improve. The use of ICT has been successfully incorporated into schemes of work for some modules. The improvement since the previous inspection is good

Mathematics across the curriculum

116. There is no key skills course in the application of number. Students use mathematics competently whenever this is required in their studies.

SCIENCE

Biology was inspected in full; chemistry and physics were sampled. In chemistry, in 2003, A and AS-level results were well above the national averages. In physics, examination results were broadly average. In the one physics lesson seen, Year 13 students, setting up individual extended investigations, showed high attainment and very good achievement. In the one lesson of chemistry seen, teaching was very effective. The Year 13 students had excellent attitudes to their work and were making good progress. Standards were well above average and achievement was very good.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the A-level examinations are above average.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Teachers have very good knowledge on the subject.
- Leadership has high aspirations and provides a clear sense of direction.
- The monitoring of teaching is insufficiently thorough.
- Some equipment is unsuitable for A-level work and needs updating.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
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Commentary

Examination results

117. The proportion of students achieving A or B grades in A-level examinations in 2003 was close to the national average, in line with expectations based on their GCSE results. Results were above average in 2002, when more students followed the course. In both years, all students achieved a grade.

Standards and achievement

118. By the end of Year 13, students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of biological concepts. They have good recall of earlier work, which they apply well to new situations. They have good practical skills and use biological vocabulary confidently. Students in Year 12 build effectively on earlier GCSE work and apply more advanced ideas well to their basic knowledge of the subject. Students have very mature attitudes, which encourage a very good learning environment. They work very hard and concentrate extremely well in lessons. Working relationships are very positive and allow for highly effective interactions between teachers and students.

Teaching and learning

119. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, which they use well to explain biological concepts. They have a good awareness of students' strengths and weaknesses and provide a good balance of encouragement and challenge in lessons. Teaching is enthusiastic and provides students with a good variety of activities and a range of opportunities for working independently. As a result, students work with interest and learn effectively. They handle new ideas confidently. Teachers assess students' progress well. They have a good knowledge of the A-level course requirements and, as a result, students have a realistic understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Consequently, students have considerable confidence in their teachers and feel very well supported. Nearly all of them complete both the A and the AS-level courses. This, together with the good standards achieved, means that the subject is popular with students.

Leadership and management

120. The head of biology has high aspirations for the subject and a very clear sense of purpose and direction. Management is good. Work in the subject is distributed effectively between the three teachers involved and the assessment of students' progress is co-ordinated well across the department. Whilst the overall performance of the subject is evaluated effectively, some aspects of the monitoring of teaching are too informal and could be made more rigorous. This would enable the good practice in the subject to be identified and shared better.

121. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Provision has been extended and the numbers of students taking the subject have remained consistently high. The new A-level courses have been introduced effectively and teachers have a very good understanding of the latest requirements. Although examination results declined slightly in 2003, standards remain above average with students achieving well.

122. Curricular provision is good. There is a wide range of textbooks available and practical work is well supported by a very efficient team of technicians. However, there is a shortage of the more specialised resources required for modern biology courses and inadequacies in some equipment, particularly microscopes. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, since it does not provide ready access to the ICT facilities required.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

A-level ICT was sampled in Years 12 and 13 through observation of a sixth-form lesson, scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils. Students achieved very high standards in A-level examinations in 2003 and well above the levels expected on the basis of their GCSE results. Standards of current students shows them to be on target to achieve very good results in their final examinations.

HUMANITIES

History and geography were inspected in full and sociology was sampled. Sociology results in 2002, when the school last had candidates for A-level, were well below the national average as only one student achieved a high grade. In the lesson seen on the current course, good teaching resulted in students effectively planning and structuring essays. Standards were broadly average and students were gaining in confidence and achieving well.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are taught well. This means that they are able to achieve their full potential.
- Teachers are very enthusiastic and make use of a wide range of strategies to motivate and engage students.
- Leadership is very good and good management procedures ensure that the department functions smoothly.
- Students would benefit from educational visits, such as to a revision conference.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
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Commentary

Examination results

123. Results in the 2003 A-level examination were well above average, with a high proportion of A or B grades and all students achieving at least an E grade. These results were well above students' expected grades.

Standards and achievement

124. The standards achieved by students who are currently studying history in Years 12 and Year 13 are broadly average. This represents good achievement in the context of their prior attainment at GCSE and all groups of students are enabled to work to their full potential. Students analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of historical evidence to produce well-balanced arguments. Most students write well and their confidence in analysing or explaining orally has improved since the last inspection.

Teaching and learning

125. Teaching in the sixth form is good with many very good features. Teachers are clearly enthusiastic about their subject and students are very positive about their history lessons. A very small number of students, however, are poor attenders which means they have to spend too much time catching up on missed work. They show high levels of perseverance and concentration, particularly when working on their personal studies of historical personalities such as Che Guevara or Winston Churchill. A main strength of the teaching is the high expectations that teachers have of students. Students clearly enjoy being challenged and, in discussions during the week of the inspection, clearly felt that the challenge provided by their history lessons was a reason for choosing the subject in the first place. Teachers make use of a wide range of activities, styles and tasks to motivate and engage their students. This is another strength of the teaching.

Leadership and management

126. The head of department has very clear ideas of how to improve the department further and good management strategies ensure that this happens. The two teachers work very well together as a team and students benefit from their different and complementary strengths. Good use is made of the library to supplement the department's supply of books but students do not benefit from any outside visits to venues such as revision conferences. The number of students opting to study history at A-level has increased. All issues identified in the previous inspection have been well addressed.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to above average standards and good achievement.
- Very good support and guidance for coursework, fieldwork and examinations promote effective learning.
- Very thorough planning and a wide range of teaching methods result in good learning.
- Teachers' questions in lessons are not always sufficiently searching.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
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Commentary

Examination results

127. Results at AS and A-level in 2003 were above average. Students' grades were above those expected on the basis of their GCSE results and showed that students had made good progress during Years 12 and 13.

Standards and achievement

128. Students develop a very sound knowledge of places, through their case studies, in regions such as China, Italy and parts of Africa, South East Asia and the United Kingdom. They also develop good geographical skills. Students become very proficient in their use and analysis of data. They make very good use of relevant data, graphs and diagrams in their coursework, fieldwork and essays. For example, the most capable students can give very detailed accounts of the relationship between human processes, such as urbanisation, and physical patterns through analysis of records shown by a storm hydrograph. Many students can explain complex interactions between physical and human systems. At all levels, students make at least sound and many make good progress during Years 12 and 13 so that they achieve well.

Teaching and learning

129. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods including many normally associated with teaching lower down the school. This means that pupils are motivated and engaged by interesting activities and lessons rather than overburdened with note taking. Teaching is very closely linked to the examination syllabus and the demands of the examination. There are very good course guidelines for students that indicate precisely what is to be learnt and the necessary depth of study. Students feel very well prepared for fieldwork, module assessment and examinations. The teaching effectively illustrates ways of structuring their answers and their coursework. Teachers make very good use of the Internet to find up-to-date information and topical examples, which students can use to illustrate their work. Students are very involved in lessons by the teachers and respond very positively. Most students contribute in class discussions. Although discussion in lessons is often good, teachers' questions are not always as demanding as the topics set for homework. Assessment and marking are very

accurate and diagnostic. Pupils' essays are marked very thoroughly and pupils appreciate the level of feedback. Pupils commented on the quality of preparation for examinations, fieldwork and coursework.

Leadership and management

130. There is a good ethos in the department where the sharing of ideas and the challenging of established practices leads to improvements to procedures. For example, ICT is now used consistently well in teaching. Day-to-day administration is well organised.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

131. No subjects were reported in full or sampled in this area. The 2003 A-level results in design and technology were broadly average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

132. Art and design and music were inspected in full. Photography and theatre studies were sampled. The first A-level candidates in photography will be examined this year. In the two lessons seen, teachers shared their good knowledge of examination requirements with their students so that they understood just what was expected of them. Students show their wide range of practical skills in taking and processing black and white photographs and in scanning and manipulating digital coloured photographs. Two lessons of theatre studies were seen, one with Year 12 and one with Year 13. Teaching was characterised by thorough knowledge of the subject, effective planning and good pace. Students were given extensive opportunities to explore texts in a highly original way, which enabled them to produce creative work of a very high quality.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers are skilful and committed.
- A successful programme of extra-curricular activities supports students' good achievement.
- Accommodation offers good opportunities for study.
- Students have a clear understanding of examination requirements and undertake a searching process of self review.
- Individual target setting does not always provide the direction needed by some students.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	Satisfactory
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good

Commentary

Examination results

133. A-level examination results in recent years have been below national levels. In 2003, the proportion achieving A to E grades came into line with the national average but the proportion

of students achieving the top grades A or B fell short of the national average. Results were generally in line with students' expected grades. The numbers of students choosing art and design has varied in recent years. It dipped in 2001 to less than ten, but has recovered and stabilised since then.

Standards and achievement

134. The quality of work seen was higher than examination results would indicate. Much of the finished work from current students and students of recent years, is of a similar standard to that achieved by foundation year students in higher education. This has been recognised by two local institutes of higher education. They openly encourage students from the school to apply for their courses because they know they will have received a comprehensive grounding in researching and developing individual responses to common stimuli. Able students respond well to the course. They are extremely successful in developing their skills and acquiring artistic maturity. Less secure students, however, are more tentative in their work. Although they, too, carry out comprehensive research, they sometimes lack the interpretive skill to select from it to create their personal response, so that final outcomes are over complicated or confused.

Teaching and learning

135. Teachers lead by example. They prepare and introduce projects in such a way as to captivate their students, who, once motivated, embark upon a sustained period of systematic research and exploration before synthesising their work in a personal response. Fieldtrips to capital cities in other countries are designed to immerse students in particular forms of art, special to that area. These provide rich sources of information, as well as engendering a mature working relationship within the group, which is sustained back in school to very good effect. Students are encouraged to develop additional skills in ICT and digital photography to support their work. A well-resourced ICT suite and studio where each student has a permanent space to work, reinforce their professional and mature approach to work. In addition, all students are encouraged to attend life-drawing classes after school, arranged by the department.

Leadership and management

136. Leadership and management in the sixth form are good. The programme on offer meets the needs of those students intending to go on to higher education. However, those not aspiring to a career in art are less well served. The department has recognised this and has already responded by introducing more tightly-structured projects.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and lead to very good achievement.
- Students' attitudes are very good and help their learning.
- Schemes of work for the sixth-form course needs developing.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 12
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
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Commentary

Examination results

137. Advanced-level results in 2003 for the small group of students were well above average with all but one achieving a grade A. Progress from GCSE showed that their achievement was very good.

Standards and achievement

138. At present, there are no Year 13 music students in the school. However, standards seen in Year 12 were above national expectations, indicating that students were achieving well in the light of their GCSE results. Students have a very good knowledge of forms and structures, which was demonstrated in a lesson on 'Midsummer Night's Dream' by Mendelssohn. They successfully identified extracts from the music and could explain which part of the work they were taken from. In composing, they could use chords and their inversions confidently when harmonising melodies.

Teaching and learning

139. The teaching seen in Year 12 was good, with work suitably modified and well adapted to students' individual needs. Students worked with interest and enthusiasm, building on good teaching, so they make very good progress. The limited ICT facilities and lack of suitable software in the department limits the range of activities that students can undertake, especially in composition.

Leadership and management

140. Management is satisfactory. However, more work needs to be undertaken to develop detailed schemes of work in the sixth form. The use of the sixth form to assist with the department's extra-curricular provision is an area for development.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well, in response to very good teaching.
- Standards are above average.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject and this contributes to very good learning.
- There is very good leadership and management of a subject which has been introduced relatively recently to the school.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
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Commentary

Examination results

141. In 2003, as in the previous two years, standards attained in the A-level examinations were very high, with all students obtaining at least a pass grade and a high proportion obtaining an A or B grade.

Standards and achievement

142. Students in Year 13 show levels of knowledge and understanding and skills in performance, which are above national expectations. This represents good achievement for both boys and girls. Many students join the sixth form with high standards in physical education and continue to build on their prior performance very well, in response to lively and skilful teaching. Students take pride in their work, reflecting their very positive attitudes overall. This is demonstrated, for example, in the comprehensive individual performance portfolios on different areas of sport.

Teaching and learning

143. Teaching and learning are very good. Most significantly, there is a strong emphasis on students learning actively, even in theory lessons. This was seen, for example, in a Year 12 lesson in which students gained a good understanding of theories of learning and conditioning through the practical experience of using a range of toys. Students are used to researching and presenting their results both individually and collaboratively. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject, which they transmit with an enthusiasm that motivates students very effectively and makes them respond to the high expectations, which are a hallmark of the department.

Leadership and management

144. Leadership and management are very good. The examination course was introduced relatively recently and did not exist at the time of the previous inspection. The department has succeeded in establishing the course securely. It monitors progress well and achieves good results. Specialist accommodation and the teaching of specialist, enthusiastic staff, working as a team, also contribute to good standards.

BUSINESS

145. Teaching in economics was sampled. In the lesson seen, teaching was good. The teacher made good use of a range of methods and up-to-date resources to illustrate key ideas. This effectively engaged students' interest so that they made good progress in understanding the different styles of leadership and the effects of these on business. They were fully involved in discussions and were able to link theoretical models to actual real-world examples. A-level results in 2003 were close to the national average.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

146. It was not possible to observe the tutorial programme for personal development during the period of the inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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