

INSPECTION REPORT

**S. PETER'S COLLEGIATE SCHOOL
(CHURCH OF ENGLAND)**

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104399

Principal: Reverend HD Bishop

Lead inspector: Derek Hawley

Dates of inspection: 15 - 18 March 2004

Inspection number: 264017

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1013
School address:	Compton Park Compton Road West Wolverhampton West Midlands
Postcode:	WV3 9DU
Telephone number:	01902 558600
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. R. Norden
Date of previous inspection:	23 February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

S. Peter's Collegiate Church of England School is a voluntary aided five form entry specialist technology school. It is heavily over-subscribed and draws students who meet its key admission criterion of having an Anglican, other Christian or other faith background from all parts of Wolverhampton and the surrounding area. Students' attainment on entry is above average. Although students are drawn from all wards in Wolverhampton, including the most disadvantaged, they are well supported by their parents and the school has an advantaged intake in terms of social background. About a quarter of the students are from ethnic minority backgrounds though none are at an early stage in their understanding of English. Student mobility in and out of the school is very low. The proportion of students with special needs is very low compared with the national average. The Anglican foundation of the school and its Christian ethos are seen as very significant and distinctive features, influencing all that the school does. It has a large sixth form which works with other schools in the area to form a consortium offering a very wide range of post-16 courses. The school became a Beacon School in 2001 and a Leading Edge school in 2003. It is therefore highly committed to working within its local community and sharing expertise with and working in partnership with other schools in the area, particularly disadvantaged schools and those that share its Anglican foundation. The school has won a wide range of awards: DfES School Achievement, Investors in People status, Artsmark, Sportsmark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Careers Guidance Quality Mark and Work Experience Quality Mark.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English
13046	Mick Marks	Team inspector	Mathematics
30825	Keith Hayton	Team inspector	Science 11-16, Chemistry P16
31688	Brian McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design 11-16 & P16
2686	Brian Oppenheim	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-16 & P16
24127	Jim Kidd	Team inspector	History 11-16, German P16
30749	Heather Boyle	Team inspector	Geography
6364	Geoff Strack	Team inspector	Information and communication technology 11-16 & P16
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Citizenship, Music 11-16 & P16
21855	Dennis Carty	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
33255	Deborah Hollister	Team inspector	Physical education
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	Business education, 11-16 & P16 Physical education P16
2625	Jim Muncey	Team inspector	Special educational needs
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

S. Peter's Collegiate School is very effective and provides very good value for money. The excellent leadership of the Principal, backed by very good support from other senior staff and governors, provides clear, coherent and principled direction, founded on Christian values. This clarity and the effort and enterprise of the teachers leads to education of good quality with some very good and outstanding features. Parents and students value this quality highly. The school's specialist status in technology and its commitment to community partnerships has a strong impact on the breadth of students' experience and their achievement. Standards are very high in Years 7-11 and good by the end of students' sixth form studies. Students achieve very well up to Year 11 but in the sixth form, though achievement is satisfactory, students build less well on their earlier achievement.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in the classroom and measured by test and examination results are very high in Years 7 -11. Students build very well on their earlier achievement up to Year 11, particularly so in English, music and science and, in Years 10 and 11, in art and design and technology;
- Achievement in the sixth form, while satisfactory, is not as high as in the rest of the school;
- Excellent use has been made of specialist technology status and of the school's outstanding range of partnerships with the wider Anglican, educational and business communities to broaden the curriculum and improve the quality of education overall;
- The very positive climate established in the school has a strong effect on students' attitudes to each other and to learning, both of which are very good. Mechanisms for acting on students' views - though improving - are not yet strong enough;
- Leadership and management are very good across the school. Good progress has been made on evaluation but it is not yet sharply focused enough on measuring the impact of planned developments on learning;
- Teaching is good overall. While there are many examples of very good and excellent teaching, some lessons are not challenging enough to higher attaining students and, in the sixth form, do not consistently make the best use of students' well developed skills as learners;
- There are shortcomings in the feedback provided to students through marking so that they are not always clear of what they need to do to improve their work.

The school has responded well to the last inspection and made good progress. It is now a very good school. Students' achievement is higher and examination and test results are much better. The quality of teaching has improved substantially. Middle managers are more effective in evaluation. While the quality of development planning is better it could be sharper still. Shortcomings remain in the quality of marking.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Students' achievement is good overall. They join the school with above-average attainment and build well on this because of good teaching and clear targets. Standards are high in Years 7 to 9 and achievement is very good. Standards in the national tests in Year 9 English and science are notably

high. In Years 10 and 11 standards improve further and students' achievement is very good. Girls usually do better than boys up to Year 11 but boys do much better than boys nationally. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds, students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students usually achieve well. In the sixth form achievement is satisfactory. Standards in recent AS and A level examinations are average overall, though work seen in the inspection was of higher quality than recent examination results suggest.

Students' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Most have very good attitudes to learning, behave very well and benefit from the high expectations and the very good climate established in the school. Attendance is very good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly supported by the school's ethos and is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides education of good quality with some very good and outstanding features. Teaching is good overall and there is a significant amount of very strong teaching spread across subjects and years. There is less very strong teaching in the sixth form than in the rest of the school. Very good teaching is particularly apparent in Years 7 and 8. Across the school, teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and relationships are good. As a result students are interested and work hard. Many students have good learning skills and in the best lessons these are used well. In a minority of lessons, particularly in the sixth form, teachers do not make good use of students' capacity to work things out together and to learn independently. Planning is usually good but some teachers do not make good use of the outcomes of assessment to tailor work to individuals and so do not succeed in challenging all students. The quality of feedback to students through marking is inconsistent.

The curriculum is very good, provides a variety of pathways for students and is enriched by excellent community links and a very good guidance programme. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular and additional activities. Links with parents are very good while links with the community and partnerships with other schools are outstanding and have a strong impact on the quality the school provides. Day-to-day support for students is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The school is excellently led by the Principal, who is very strongly supported by other key staff. The Principal's clear vision is widely shared by staff and by knowledgeable, committed and supportive governors. The result is a very coherent and principled approach to the school's ethos and a strong sense of direction. The school is ambitious to improve further and clear about the improvements that are needed. It is outward-looking and uses its status as a specialist Technology College and a Leading Edge School well. It is committed to sharing expertise and resources with others and to learning from them. This emphasis on community and partnerships has a strong impact on teaching and learning and is one of the reasons for rising standards. The evaluation of current performance is accurate; the school has already identified and is working on the main issues for improvement identified by the inspection. The use of data is increasingly sophisticated but evaluation does not focus sharply enough on students' learning.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is heavily over-subscribed. Most parents are very supportive, appreciate the many opportunities the school offers and have high confidence in its quality and leadership. There were some concerns about consistency in relation to challenging higher attaining students, marking and the setting of demanding homework. Inspectors found parents' confidence very well founded but agree that there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching which affect marking and on occasion homework. Students are also very positive about the school, particularly its atmosphere and teaching. Some have reservations about behaviour and the extent to which students' views

influence the school. Inspectors found behaviour very good and that the school, having made very good arrangements for collecting and publicising students' views, is now beginning to act on them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has many strengths. The most important things to do to improve the good quality of education further have already been identified by the school and are:

- focus as a priority on raising achievement in the sixth form to match the very high levels in Years 7 to 11;
- continue to monitor lessons to identify how the best teaching leads to effective learning so that this high quality is spread across the school to improve challenge and the use of independent learning skills;
- make monitoring and evaluation across the school sharper and more focused on the quality of students' learning and achievement;
- improve the consistency and use of marking and feedback so that students:
 - (a) know exactly what they need to do to achieve the high targets the school sets and
 - (b) teachers use the outcomes of marking to adjust their planning to meet the full range of needs in their classes;
- improve the very positive climate of the school still further by paying more attention to students' views;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide reports to parents on information and communication technology for all students in Years 10 and 11.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The large sixth form is effective and cost effective. Standards have risen since the last inspection and are above the national average for advanced level courses by the end of Year 13 but average when students' AS results are taken into account. Many students achieve very high results but a significant proportion do not achieve as highly as their earlier GCSE results suggest they should. Standards seen in current lessons are often above average with many students working at the level of their challenging individual targets. This is because teaching is good. Overall, achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory. The curriculum is very broad and meets the needs of most students very well. A very high proportion of students continue into higher education.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching - teachers are very knowledgeable and most, by their enthusiasm and support, readily win the confidence and respect of students;
- The curriculum on offer through the local consortium is very broad and enhanced by a very good range of additional activities;
- There is some excellent and very good teaching but the proportion is lower in the sixth form than in the rest of the school;
- Some teaching lacks excitement. Some teachers do not make the best use of students' capacity for independent learning and learning with each other because they are over-dependent on direct teaching;
- Provision for lower-attaining students who wish to continue their education at school requires improvement.

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. Those inspected in detail are highlighted in bold type.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English. Students achieve well because of the good quality of teaching. Good in German. Standards and achievement are rising because of good teaching. Oral proficiency is a strength. Provision in French and Spanish is satisfactory. Teaching is good; standards and achievement satisfactory.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. A level mathematics and further mathematics courses are well taught and students are well motivated so they learn and achieve well. There is no advanced provision for students with higher grades in GCSE mathematics who did not take a higher level GCSE course.
Science	Satisfactory in biology. Strong staff expertise and students' good attitudes support good standards and satisfactory achievement. Good in chemistry. Good teaching leads to good learning and standards in line with national averages. Good in physics. Standards are high because students are well taught, enthusiastic and hard working. Opportunities for students to learn independently are limited in biology, chemistry and physics. Excellent teaching and high achievement in electronics.
Information and communication technology	Good. There is very good teaching and students work hard. Current standards are average and achievement is good.
Humanities	Satisfactory in history. Competent and knowledgeable teaching leads to good learning and satisfactory achievement. Very good in geography. High standards and achievement result from good teaching and effective assessment.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Good in technology. Students with a wide range of prior attainment achieve well because teaching encourages and supports students in working

Visual and performing arts	independently on challenging tasks. Satisfactory in art and design. Good teaching and good informal feedback lead to satisfactory achievement. Students make very good use of their visual diaries. Assessment, recording and tracking procedures lack rigour. Very good in music. Standards are consistently above average. Enthusiastic teaching underpinned by high expectations and subject expertise motivates students and results in very good achievement.
Hospitality, sports leisure and travel	Very good in physical education. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and very good student-teacher relations.
Business	Good in business studies. The department provides an impressive range of business courses. Students achieve well because of good teaching and very good student-teacher relations.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The quality of personal advice and support from teachers is good overall. Guidance for students entering the sixth form is thorough and there is comprehensive support for students applying to higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good overall. There is a clear commitment to raising standards. Close attention is now paid to the evaluation of student and departmental progress. A challenging target setting regime has been established achieving a high level of awareness among staff and students. There are effective arrangements for the long term management of the sixth form consortium but arrangements for quality assurance are not focused enough on teaching and learning. The improving practice in teaching and learning which is raising achievement up to 16 has not yet had enough impact post-16.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are extremely positive about what they rightly see as a well run school. They appreciate the enthusiasm of, relationships with and support from their teachers. They are very positive about the teaching. They support the strong ethos of the school and are glad of the wide range of opportunities and facilities. Most, but by no means all, feel they can readily turn to a staff member if they have a personal problem. They feel they are treated fairly and are safe in school, knowing there will be a quick reaction to bullying or racial abuse. Advice from the school for higher education entry is seen as good though there are reservations about some aspects of guidance before joining the sixth form, though inspectors found this process thorough. Some aspects of the personal social and health education programme are regarded as repetitive of work done in earlier years. Students feel that more attention could be paid to their views.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall achievement at S. Peter's Collegiate School is good, and very good between Years 7 and 11 where standards are much higher than nationally. By the end of Year 13 standards in Advanced Level General Certificate Examinations (A level) are above the national average but students do not achieve as well when their Advanced Supplementary (AS) examinations are taken into account. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory overall but current students' achievement is good in a number of subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of good teaching, results in national tests in Year 9 and in many General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses in Year 11 are substantially above the national average and overall results are very good compared with similar schools.
- There has been a clear upward trend in test and examination results both in the main school and the sixth form since the previous inspection in 1998.
- Students, because of their very good attitudes and motivation, build significantly on earlier achievement by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and do much better than similar students in other schools.
- Overall standards in the sixth form are broadly comparable to national standards and improving, so that they are often above average in current lessons, but in recent examinations students were not as successful in building on their earlier achievement as they were lower down the school.

Commentary

1. Standards are very high in Years 7 to 11. The attainment of students joining the school in Year 7 is clearly above average. They build very effectively on the skills they bring with them. Students progress well because the teaching is effective and the climate for learning is very good. They are well supported by their parents and they have clear and challenging targets. Students do very well in the national tests in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9. Test results have been improving faster than the national trend but more quickly in English and science than in mathematics. Students' results compare very favourably with the results of similar students in other schools.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	80 (81.6)	51.5(49.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	90.5 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100(100)	95.9(96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	44.1(44.2)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 166 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Students go on to build effectively on their very high Year 9 achievement during their examination courses in Years 10 and 11. They are well taught by staff who know examination requirements well and usually have high expectations of what they should achieve. Overall achievement is very good by the end of Year 11. Compared with similar students in other schools, S. Peter's students' results are very high. From a high starting point results have kept up with the

rising national trend. In the core subjects of English and science standards and achievement are very high. Standards in mathematics are also well above average but not as high as in English and science. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. GCSE examination results in 2003 in several other subjects were also very much higher than the national average especially in art, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education.

3. Students throughout the school have very good English language and literacy skills. Extended writing is well organised and accurate. They have well-developed reading skills and are able to cope with a wide range of specialist texts, for example in history where they use specialist language with confidence. Students also read aloud confidently, fluently and with expression. Skills in speaking and listening are very good. Students explain themselves clearly and develop and amplify the points they make. They are able to engage effectively in discussions. They learn well because they are able to listen for extended periods of time and because they show respect for the contributions of other students. There is a strong emphasis in mathematics on developing students' speaking skills and time is given for them to think and then explain what they know and understand.
4. Students' numeracy skills on entry to the school are above average. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11 standards of numeracy are well above average. Good progress is made in improving number skills. Students are highly numerate, manipulating numbers confidently and in many different contexts. In geography students construct and interpret graphs, charts and tables very well and higher ability students use advanced statistical methods. In business studies students use surveys effectively. In history population graphs are used well and students extract data from a range of databases very effectively.
5. Students' skills in using information and communications technology are generally good and they achieve well up to Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 skills are about average, because not all aspects of the National Curriculum programme are covered in equal depth. ICT skills are put to use effectively by students in many parts of the curriculum, though access to computers in modern foreign languages and music is on occasion limited.
6. Up to the end of Year 11 girls do better than boys. While the performance gap is wide it is not as wide as it is nationally. Both boys and girls achieve very well compared with boys and girls nationally. Boys are further ahead of boys nationally than girls are ahead of girls nationally. In the 2003 GCSE examinations girls were more successful in building on their earlier high achievement than boys.
7. Students with special educational needs, including those with statements, are achieving very well because teachers recognize and plan for their needs and they are well supported in the classroom.
8. Students who the school has identified as gifted and talented achieve well when teachers pay full attention to their needs in their lesson planning. Their achievement is very good in Years 7 to 11 but not as high in the sixth form. In some lessons the style of teaching limits students' independent learning. Special provision for gifted and talented students through additional activities and special events has a positive impact on their achievement.
9. There are no students in the school who are not fluent English speakers. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds in many cases achieve as well as or better than the school average. Indian and Pakistani students achieve above the whole school average by Year 11. The school has recognised that some groups – especially black boys – do not achieve quite as well as students generally do in the school. When they take Year 9 tests, black students do not build as successfully on their earlier achievements in primary school as other students. An effective mentoring programme, strongly focused on raising the achievement of black students, has been established using funds from a variety of sources. This is helping students on the programme to improve their motivation and the quality of their work. By the end of Year 11 black students are achieving results close to what might be expected from their earlier achievement.

10. The school is not content to rest on its laurels. There is rigorous departmental analysis of the results of individual students and tracking of progress towards tests and examinations. Throughout the school students have demanding targets based on their earlier achievement. School targets are challenging, based on students doing at least as well as the top quarter of students with similar prior attainment across the country.

Sixth Form

11. By the end of Year 13 standards in A level examinations are above average - especially so for boys in 2003 - but the proportion of students achieving the highest grades is somewhat lower than the national average. This is partly explained by the inclusive and open-access nature of the sixth form. There is a significant number of students who in recent examinations did not achieve as highly as their earlier performance suggested they should. A reason for lower than expected achievement is that students' skills in working independently, undertaking research and working collaboratively with others are not fully exploited by all teachers. Some teachers have a tendency towards teacher-focused lessons to the detriment of students' active learning. The difficulty some students have in handling the transition into the sixth form is more visible at AS level in Year 12. Once students have settled on their advanced courses in Year 13, standards tend to rise. The school is now setting very demanding targets for students on post-16 courses and many are rising to the challenge. Standards seen in lessons during the inspection were often above average and high attaining students are often reaching very high standards.

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	98.1 (98.4)	97.7(97.7)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	31.8 (37.2)	42.1(40.8)
Average point score per pupil	249.8(241.3)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 120 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Most students enjoy and appreciate the school, its high expectations and strong ethos. As a consequence their attendance, punctuality, behaviour and attitudes are all very good and this has high impact on their achievement. The school's Christian foundation and strong ethical code ensure that students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong Christian ethos of the school underpins very good behaviour and a sense of responsibility throughout the school.
- Attendance levels are very high, especially in Years 7 to 9; procedures to monitor attendance and punctuality are very good.
- The school, through its caring and inclusive approach, is successful in assuring very positive attitudes. Exclusions are rare.
- Staff and parents work together very effectively in the promotion of good behaviour and students contribute through a very effective 'buddy system'.
- Some students feel that there is some bullying but agree that the school acts very decisively to deal with problems that arise in connection with bullying or racial abuse.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.8
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	775	1	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	26	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	80	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	11	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	82	1	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	17	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

12. The school’s electronic recording system for the monitoring of attendance is administered efficiently with care taken to follow up reasons for unexplained absence. Attendance was over 96% in 2002-3 and unauthorised absence almost nil. Students in Years 7 to 9 have particularly high attendance rates as do the sixth form. There are effective procedures for monitoring and acting upon the few cases of concern.

13. The school takes pride in being inclusive and meeting the needs of all students and is successful in achieving positive attitudes from the vast majority. Exclusions are very rare, and where they do take place, the process is fair and fully in accordance with expected procedure. The success of these measures is a tribute to the importance that staff and parents see in the role of the school in students’ lives.

14. The Christian ethos of the school is apparent in every aspect of school life. There is a daily act of worship in which students play an active role. Students are encouraged to follow Christian codes of conduct in their every day lives. Voluntary church services are well attended and there are many school activities with faith connections, such as the well-supported gospel choir. Students are considerate to one another and respect members of staff. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility in supporting the school’s ethos, for example through charity work, community service, working as librarians and participating in school councils. A very effective Welcome Club run by older students helps new students settle in quickly and a buddy system is used to provide support to younger students. Older students apply to become ‘buddies’ and receive

training. They have a well-organised duty roster and many younger students say that they feel more secure in the playground because of this system. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is noticeably very good. Though students report exceptions to this these were rarely seen during the inspection.

15. The school has recently commissioned a student survey entitled 'The Voice of the Learner at the Heart of the System'. This gathered the views of the students about the quality of education they receive. Students overwhelmingly said that S. Peter's is a good school to be at and is well run. Nearly all regard the teaching as very good and more than four fifths said that they were trusted to do things on their own. Some students feel that behaviour policies could be more evenly applied. Students regard the school as safe and believe that there are good procedures for dealing with bullying or racial abuse which are swiftly and strongly applied.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

16. The Christian ethos of the school contributes very significantly to students' personal development. The school fosters students' spiritual development well. In this respect the role of the religious education is pivotal but this is supported by daily assemblies which encourage reflection and self-knowledge. Students are articulate, mature and thoughtful. Assemblies are held regularly, and the school ensures that the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is met. Some subjects, for example English and music, make a point of giving students time in lessons to reflect and evaluate their work, valuing contributions made by their peers, though such opportunities are not seized by all teachers

17. Moral and social development is very good, because of the varied opportunities given to students in lessons, and through extra curricular activities. Students understand the need for rules and order in society. Teachers are good role models. Students relate well to each other and adults. The school places great store by courtesy, consideration and mature behaviour in every area. Students have a clear view of right and wrong. This ensures a well-ordered, disciplined and harmonious community. Through the varied extra-curricular activities students are able to exercise responsibility and work in different social groups. A very good example of this was seen during the special off timetable day held during the inspection. The timetable was suspended for Year 10 students as they worked with students from other schools including a local special school, in science, design and information and communication technology activities under the theme 'Equal People'.

18. The religious education department provides well to enhance students' awareness and understanding of other faiths and cultures. Some other departments contribute equally well, however this is not consistent. As a result opportunities are missed as departments, for example design technology and art and design, do not reinforce and extend through their curriculum the values students learn in their religious education lessons.

Sixth Form

19. Sixth form students play a very active part in supporting students lower down the school. The buddy system is well thought out and effective, particularly in the part it plays in Year 7 induction procedures. The training by qualified staff associated with becoming a buddy is always oversubscribed. This role significantly enhances students' responsibility as do opportunities for community service, the Young Enterprise scheme and the Junior Sports Leader Awards.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides education of good quality with some very good and outstanding features. Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good. The curriculum is extensive and of high quality both in and beyond the timetabled day. Students are very well supported in a safe environment. Parents are very supportive of the school and of their children's learning. Extensive

community links and partnerships are an outstanding feature which enhance the curriculum and have a very positive impact on the school's ethos and students' learning and achievement.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good. Almost all lessons were satisfactory. Teaching has clearly improved since the last inspection with more very good and excellent lessons and far fewer being judged unsatisfactory. Improvement in the quality of teaching results from the strong impact of the very good leadership and management at many levels in the school and is a major reason for rising achievement. The proportion of very good and excellent lessons was highest in Years 7 and 8 and lowest in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in music and geography across the school, in science in Years 7 to 11 and in English in Years 7 to 9
- Teachers have a very strong command of their subjects, are enthusiastic and most plan well and explain clearly. This makes for lively lessons which challenge students.
- Some lessons do not challenge students enough because teachers have not taken into account in their planning what students can already do.
- Relationships between teachers and students are usually good: this creates a very good climate for learning where students feel confident to express a view and collaborate with others.
- In most lessons students are well-motivated and willing to learn.
- In some lessons students' well-developed study skills to undertake research, work independently or with others are under-used when teachers talk too much.
- Marking and the use of assessment information is inconsistent. It is good in some subjects, for example music, but in many there is not enough guidance through the marking about how students can improve their work nor do teachers use the outcomes of assessment sufficiently to guide their lesson planning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 173 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (3%)	45 (26%)	77(45%)	45 (26%)	2 (1%)	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.

20. There is some very strong teaching and high quality learning spread across subjects. It is most consistent in English, science, geography and music in Years 7-9. Teaching and learning are strongest in Years 7, 8 and 9 where the clear planning, range of activity and brisk pace of a significant proportion of lessons indicate that many teachers have responded effectively to the national strategy for teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. These approaches are beginning to influence teaching in Years 10 and 11 but have so far had limited impact in the sixth form.

21. Teacher's knowledge and understanding of their subjects is often very good. At its best this leads to clear and flexible explanations of difficult concepts, for example in geography, and to an emphasis on students' understanding of the technical vocabulary they need to do well, for example in technology. Planning is often very good. There is a good understanding of examination requirements, which in part explains the very good examination and test results the school achieves, though on occasion the emphasis on meeting examination requirements restricts the flexibility of students' learning. Students rate the teaching highly.

22. The strengths of the teaching lie in the very good climate for learning the school achieves. Across the school students arrive at most lessons with an expectation that they will work hard and be challenged to give of their best. Students' very positive attitudes together with the good relationships between teachers and students achieved in most classrooms mean that this expectation is achieved in many lessons. This is particularly so when the lesson is well planned and moves along quickly with changes of activity. In these lessons students have an opportunity to show initiative and are encouraged to discuss the work they are doing through skilful questioning or to work collaboratively with their colleagues. When teaching and learning are at their best, the confidence students develop and the willingness of others to listen makes students ready to take risks and to enter into lively class room debate, a feature particularly seen in English.

23. Many students have good skills in independent learning. Given the opportunity, they take the initiative, apply themselves to solving problems, work well in science practical lessons and work effectively out of school on homework and coursework assignments. Some teaching is less challenging and does not make good use of the learning skills of students. Some lessons in mathematics and modern languages do not provide enough opportunity for students to work independently or with other students even though it is clear in other subjects that they gain considerably from this way of working. Challenge is reduced in some lessons because the lesson is too focused on the teacher. In mathematics there are lessons where the level of challenge is not well matched to the abilities of the students, particularly more able students in average attaining groups and Year 7 students who have advanced further in primary school than teachers give them credit for.

24. The value students gain from teacher's marking and other forms of assessment varies significantly across teachers and subjects. Feedback is very good in music. Students are guided in self-evaluation and enabled to reflect on how they might improve. The quality of marking and feedback is a weakness in several subjects. Marking does not pay sufficient attention to what students need to do to improve their work and reach their challenging targets. It is inconsistent in English and business studies. In art homework assignments are not marked with sufficient rigour. Teachers' use of the outcomes of marking and assessment to guide their future lesson planning is in need of improvement, for example in mathematics, modern foreign languages and design and technology.

25. Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is very good in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. The teaching is very effective because the objectives for lessons are clear and teachers have a detailed knowledge of the educational needs of their students. Questioning of students ensures they are challenged so their knowledge and understanding is systematically improved. Support assistants understand students' special needs and work effectively to ensure that they are fully included in all lessons. They encourage these students to contribute to discussion and provide clear feedback on their performance. This enhances their self-esteem and helps them improve their work. The use of support teachers is more variable. It works best where the teachers, whilst concentrating on supporting identified students, work with the wider group to ensure that the needs of all are met. Students' with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning. This is fostered by the challenge and support they receive in lessons which is tailored to their needs. This positive approach, together with high expectations of staff and students ensures students achieve at a high level.

26. The school's involvement in the national strategy for teaching and learning in Years 7,8 and 9 has a clear impact on achievement. This is particularly evident in English, information and communications technology (ICT) and science. The school's strategy team is working actively to spread the ideas generated by the strategy across the school.

Sixth form

27. In many subjects sixth form teaching is shared between schools in the local consortium. Sixth form teaching was sampled in the main partner school and judgments below reflect this. Teaching in the sixth form is good though the proportion of very good and excellent lessons seen

was lower than in the rest of the school. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and strong understanding of examination requirements. Students respect this and relationships between teachers and students are often very good. The best teaching creates a very good working atmosphere with students getting through work quickly and with understanding and enjoyment. Such lessons were seen in English, electronics, mathematics, music and ICT. None of the sixth form teaching was unsatisfactory but there is a significant number of lessons which are dominated by the voice of the teacher so that there is too little active involvement by students. This lack of active learning is holding back the achievement of some students. While teachers are usually good at supporting learning in the classroom, some students do not receive enough written feedback about how to improve their work.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good and is enriched by an excellent careers education and guidance programme and very strong links with the community. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered and the school has established a variety of vocational courses.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Forward planning to ensure that the curriculum continues to meet the needs and aspirations of all students is very good.
- There are very good curriculum links with community partners and there is an increasingly wide range of vocational courses on offer.
- The school's provision for careers education and guidance and work experience are excellent.
- Students benefit from a good variety of extra-curricular opportunities and there is excellent provision for musical activities.
- Provision for personal social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is good.
- Sixth form provision for lower attaining students is limited and the school is planning to increase the range of vocational courses, though the overall provision is extensive because of good consortium arrangements.

Commentary

28. The school is concerned to provide a curriculum which is relevant to the needs of all of its students. Planning is continuous and is very effective in developing a programme which is flexible enough to meet their individual needs. Technology college status plays a significant part in the development of the curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, for example, in addition to compulsory design and technology and a modern foreign language, students can follow a mix of applied GCSE courses in addition to their academic subjects. Provision of ICT across the curriculum is good but in Years 10 and 11 the depth of coverage of the skills required by National Curriculum programme of study is uneven and this has an impact on students' achievement.

29. The excellence of the school's careers guidance course and work experience programme has been recognised by its achievement of the Black Country Quality Award for both initiatives. There is strong support from partner employers many of whom visit the school on a regular basis to support students in the development of their interview skills. There is a well-stocked careers library, which also contains a range of relevant careers software and in which students seek regular advice from the Connexions representative.

30. Vocational courses are an integral element of the main school curriculum and business partners support their delivery. The double award courses in applied business and health and social care are key features of this programme and, since 2002, the school has offered a work based National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in customer service.

31. Provision for PSHE is good and comprises elements of the citizenship programme. In the GCSE years the content of PSHE and Citizenship is augmented by the short GCSE course in Religious Education. The planning for PSHE is good.
32. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including subject clubs, open to students at lunchtimes and after school. Students speak highly of these sessions and they attend sports and drama activities in large numbers. The provision for enrichment in music is excellent. There are over 300 students who have instrumental tuition and who attend a variety of orchestras, bands and choirs. Overseas music trips are a very good feature, for example the recent visit of the concert band to Prague.
33. The curriculum takes very good account of students with special educational needs, with effective support provided both in class and through withdrawal. Withdrawal does not detract from students receiving a full curriculum and is always handled sensitively. In Years 10 and 11 a few students pursue vocational qualifications in customer services, supported by relevant work experience. These pupils also receive additional, effective support to keep abreast of GCSE coursework. One of these students was very clear that without these opportunities it would not have been possible to manage in a mainstream school. The impact of the arrangements on such students' self confidence is impressive.
34. Staffing is good. The school has worked effectively to recruit and retain well-qualified teaching and support staff. The level of non-teaching staff across the school is very good and they contribute very well to the smooth running of the school and students' achievements.
35. Accommodation is safe and good in many respects. The school site is well managed and clean. Students view the Sports Hall and Theatre, with their specialist facilities, as major assets. The amount of specialist accommodation is not always adequate to need in modern foreign languages, music and business studies. This is due to the shortage of specialist rooms and facilities which can have an adverse effect teaching and learning.
36. Resources are good. The ratio of computers to students at one to 3.6 well exceeds the national average and there are four interactive whiteboards which aid teaching and learning. In spite of this, problems with access to computers do arise in music, modern foreign languages and business studies. There is a good supply of text-books and other resources. These are particularly good in design and technology, geography, history, PE and science. The school website provides good resources for learning in mathematics and science. The library, although of moderate size, has a good stock of suitable books and provides satisfactory support for students' learning.

Sixth Form

37. The school as part of the three-school local consortium offers 36 courses at A and AS level but recognises that more vocational and lower-level awards are needed if all students are to follow programmes appropriate to their abilities and aspirations. There is a very good enrichment programme, which is highly regarded by students in both sixth form years. Five lessons per week are reserved for these activities and students benefit from a wide range of courses, including critical thinking, community service, Young Enterprise, the National Youth Award and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. The personal social and health education programme in the sixth form is seen by some sixth form students as repetitive in some aspects of the ground covered lower down the school, though sessions seen during the inspection were of good quality. As a result of the sixth form's success, student numbers have outgrown the accommodation available in the sixth form area which is now inadequate and there are outline plans for a new block. Library accommodation is small given the size of the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

The school's procedures for the welfare, safety and protection of all its students including the sixth form are very good. The support and guidance given to students are also very good. The quality of

care guidance and support students receive contributes markedly to their high achievement and high attendance. Arrangements for seeking students' views through the newly implemented student survey and school council are improving and are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Care and concern for all students is a strength of the school.
- Child protection arrangements are very good.
- The provision of data and information relating to students' progress is very good.
- Both parents and students believe the school to be a very safe and caring community.
- Induction arrangements for students entering the school in Year 7 are excellent.
- Arrangements for seeking students' opinions on the school are improving rapidly but students feel more attention could be paid to their views.

38. One of the reasons for the school's success in creating a harmonious community is the very good quality care provided for each individual student. Teachers know students well and provide them with good quality support to help them succeed. Most students feel there is a member of staff they can talk to if they have a problem or difficulty. The school's approach of trying to prevent problems arising rather than reacting to them when they appear works very well. The school works very well with a range of outside agencies, including the local education authority, in improving the welfare of students. Parents and students rightly feel that the school is a very safe and caring community.

39. There are very effective procedures for ensuring child protection within the school. There is a named person with responsibility for child protection who has received appropriate training. This area was identified as a weakness in the last inspection and is now a strength. All staff have received training in order to ensure that they feel confident about their responsibilities. Health and safety arrangements in the school are good overall. Risk assessments are carried out regularly and there are daily routines to minimize hazards. The school has a clearly defined policy relating to internet access and all departments have copies of this document. The school sees pastoral care as the responsibility of all staff and they work together well in carrying out this role. There are very good procedures to support students with social and behavioural difficulties.

40. Procedures for monitoring the progress of students at key points in their school life are very good. A comprehensive central system tracks each student. Information is provided to all departments but there are inconsistencies in the way this information is used by departments to plan for improvement. The school uses an effective reward system through "merit" assemblies and occasional letters home from senior staff when students have performed unusually well.

41. The provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Parents are rightly confident in the very good support provided. Educational, social and behavioural needs are clearly understood. Staff are aware of the needs. Where necessary detailed individual plans are produced with clear targets which enable progress to be monitored. Regular review ensures the school remains responsive to changing needs.

42. The arrangements to receive students into the school in Year 7 are excellent. All students are visited by teachers in the summer term at their primary school. Parents and student are invited to an induction evening where any concerns or worries are discussed and usually resolved. Five further evenings, organised mostly by sixth form 'buddies' provide staff, students and parents with more opportunities to get to know each other. Sixth form buddies receive training from qualified counsellors and continue to provide effective support for students in the school. Parents are very appreciative of the efforts made by the school to ensure the smooth transition of their children from their primary school. Once they are settled, students receive good quality support from their form tutors.

43. The school has very good arrangements to support students in making decisions about their GCSE courses. Towards the end of Year 9, students and parents attend a meeting to discuss

options. Representatives from employers, local businesses and higher education are also present to offer future possibilities for the students. The guidance at this meeting and the careers education on offer in all year groups, combined with work placements in Year 9, provides students with very good support and guidance for entry into Year 10.

44. Arrangements for seeking students' views through the recent student survey and school council are good. A very comprehensive pupil survey relating to many aspects of school life has been completed and results have been analysed very well both by gender and different minority ethnic groups. The survey shows that students are on the whole very pleased with their life in school but believe more attention should be paid to their views. Analysis has identified aspects of school life that students think need to improve and the school is considering very carefully how changes might occur.

Sixth form

45. Support and guidance into post-16 education is good. Once in the sixth form almost all students stay the course. Careers education and work experience contribute significantly to the decisions students make about post-16 education. Each student is provided with an options book that identifies a named teacher to talk to. Members of the school management team interview each student ensuring that suitable combinations of subjects are taken. Where students want to leave the school for future employment the Connexions service provides advice and guidance about the world of work.

46. Good advice, support and guidance are offered to students in the sixth form. What students receive is regular, rigorous and supportive. Students speak very highly of the availability, accessibility and friendliness of their teachers, in whom they have complete confidence. Towards the end of the sixth form, students receive appropriate guidance on what to do next from a range of outside speakers.

47. There is some dissatisfaction expressed about the impact of the school council with a minority of sixth form students unsure that it is of great value. Overall however, the student survey indicated that sixth form students hold the school in high regard and are grateful for the quality of education they receive.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are very good. Links with the local community and with other schools are outstanding. These links have a high impact on the character of the school and contribute strongly to students' learning and achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents respond very positively when asked about the school and say they are very satisfied with its performance. The Friends Association supports the school very well.
- The school's status as a Leading Edge school is fully justified by its quality and outward-looking stance giving support to other schools and learning from them.
- There are very productive links with other, often disadvantaged, schools.
- The range of partnerships with industry and business, local education and sporting organisations is very extensive. Local organisations want to be involved with the school and feel that they benefit greatly from the association. The school makes excellent use of these links.
- The sixth form consortium considerably enhances curriculum and opportunity post-16.

Commentary

48. Parents say that they are generally very satisfied with the performance of the school. The pre-inspection meeting was well attended and more than half of all parents responded to the

questionnaire. This questionnaire showed that the vast majority of parents feel well informed and comfortable about approaching the school. A fifth of parents believed that the school could be more active in seeking parents' views, but the inspection confirmed the view of the majority. The school provides an annual report to parents on their child's progress and a mid-year assessment. There is an annual formal parents' evening for each year group. Parents are invited to target setting sessions twice a year and around 80 per cent of parents said in a recent survey that they welcome the chance to be involved in this way. The school prospectus is clear and contains all required information about the school. A newsletter provides parents with up to date general information, twice per term. The very good support provided to students with special educational needs is recognised by parents. They are involved in reviewing their children's progress and in the setting of targets.

49. The Friends Association is very active and raises much money for the school. These funds have on occasion been used to seed matched funding grants, but general funds are used to supplement the school's equipment, such as upgrading computers.

50. A major strength of the school is the enterprise it shows in building links with the wider community, particularly in relation to business, other schools, the local education authority and sport. The school makes excellent use of the resources and expertise that these organisations have to offer. These links are important both to the community partners and to the school. The links arise naturally from the school's long history as a successful specialist Technology College and have been further strengthened by its designation first as a Beacon School and more recently as a Leading Edge school.

51. The school's philosophy and annual planning are very supportive of this aspect of its development. Links, some of which are of long standing such as the link with the King's School through the Lichfield Foundation, are well managed and productive to both sides. Several links involve partnership with schools facing challenging circumstances. Partners from other schools, local business and sporting bodies warmly endorse the work of the school in seeking partnerships and sharing expertise. There is a strong and justified view among the school's leaders that the breadth of community links has a positive impact on teaching and learning in the school. It opens up staff and student horizons and brings visitors from other walks of life into the school, for example in support of the vocational curriculum and special events such as the science and technology day which took place during the inspection. As well as sharing ideas with other schools and leading on joint projects such as the gifted and talented initiative for Excellence in Cities, S. Peter's staff learn from their involvement with other schools and agencies and refine their own thinking about their work in order to share with others. Links with organisations representing other faiths are also very good and the school is well supported by the diocese of Lichfield.

52. Links with local special schools are very positive. The two way exchange of students and staff extends the self confidence and educational opportunities available to students in special schools. The experience of students from S. Peter's working alongside peers with significant disabilities has enabled them to feel confident in including them as true team members. A particularly good example of this is the Kielder Challenge, where a team of able bodied students from the school and disabled students from a partner school have achieved at the highest level for two years running.

Sixth form

53. The sixth form consortium has been developed with neighbouring schools to provide students with as wide a choice of curriculum as possible. This works well in ensuring opportunity and choice as well as wider social contact for students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The Principal's excellent leadership together with strong support from other senior staff and many middle managers make for very good leadership. The

management of the school's day to day life and very complex provision is also very good. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive; governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is extremely well led by the headteacher: the very clear vision and coherent ethos is shared widely by all who work in and with the school.
- The leadership provided by senior managers and other key staff is very good: they give a very strong lead and as a result teamwork is a strong feature that adds significantly to students' achievements.
- There is a thorough process to check the quality of teaching and learning: self-evaluation is accurate but it is not yet sharp enough.
- The school is very successful in using its status as a Technology College and Leading Edge School to work in partnership with other schools and organisations: this has a very positive impact on teaching, learning and achievement.
- The school has high ambitions for its students and its partners: it is as keen to learn from others as it is generous with its support.
- The provision of data about the school's performance is very thorough but is not yet being used to full effect to drive its ambitions for even higher achievement.

Commentary

54. Overall, the school is led very effectively. The leadership given by the Principal is outstanding. A very clear vision, high aspirations and ambitious targets all contribute very strongly to the way the school is led. There is also very effective leadership from senior managers and other key staff including heads of year and departments. A particular characteristic of the Principal's excellent leadership is the way the vision for S. Peter's is translated into a sharp and coherent ethos. There is, for example, a very strong climate for learning which pervades everything the school does and helps to explain why students achieve high standards. Another example is the way the school has tapped in to additional money to help develop and extend its work with partner schools. But what is most significant is the way the school is involved in a wide range of initiatives and developments while at the same time maintaining a very clear sense of purpose. It is this that makes leadership very good.

55. In great part, the clear vision and strong sense of purpose are the result of the way in which senior and middle leaders inspire and influence the work of the school. They all provide very good role models for all who work in and with the school. This is what gives the school direction but it also sets the very strong ethos. It is this ethos, based on the school's clear commitment to Christian values, which underpins its work and provides the framework for all its partnerships with other schools and organisations. Indeed, these partnerships illustrate clearly how the school's ethos and sense of purpose influences all that it does. The link with a Birmingham Church of England school in challenging circumstances is a good example of how S. Peter's works with other schools to support development: it shows clearly how the school's leaders are committed to raising achievement right across the region.

56. This vision and sense of purpose is illustrated well by the way the Technology College is led and managed. Attention to detail, a very clear focus on the community and strong strategic planning all come together seamlessly to provide high quality. This is illustrated by the high standards achieved in design and technology, for example. However, it is also very evident in the way S. Peter's works with other schools to develop their effectiveness and raise standards. Here, the school has established very successfully a range of initiatives to develop technology across the local area. CDATE (The Centre for Design and Technology Education) and SCENIC (Schools, Colleges and Employers Networking in the Community) are both good examples of how the school works strategically to extend and develop its work for the benefit of both its students and those in other schools. These initiatives have, for example, provided the funds to buy computer aided design and manufacturing equipment for all the schools in the area. Overall, Technology College status is used

imaginatively, and as a tool for improvement, to provide not just equipment and resources but also to raise standards. Again, this commitment is to students across the region.

57. The school is very well managed. Self-evaluation is honest and the school has already identified, and is working on, the main issues for further improvement identified by the inspection. There is a thorough process to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning through subject reviews. This process has recently been developed further, partly as a result of work with partner schools where S. Peter's has taken ideas and adapted them to fit its own circumstances. As a result of this development, reviews of the science, mathematics and design and technology departments have recently been carried out. These are very thorough and follow, in part, the Ofsted model of evaluation. As a result of their thoroughness the evaluation is accurate and has provided good information for further improvement. However, this work is not yet as sharp or systematic as it could be. There are two areas where this is the case. First, evaluations of teaching tend to focus on teachers' performance rather than the impact on students' learning. As a result, priorities for improvement do not always take enough account of raising students' achievements. Second, while there is a great deal of increasingly sophisticated data, it is not used well enough by all staff to identify clearly areas for improvement.

58. The governing body carries out its work effectively and governance is good. The governing body is very closely involved in working with the school and shares fully in helping to establish the clear vision and sense of purpose. The Chair of Governors works closely and effectively with the Principal. Governors have, for example, been fully involved in discussions and taking decisions about working with partner schools. They are very effective at holding the school to account and provide good support to senior managers. Most significantly, they support the school's strong ethos wholeheartedly. Governors have a good grasp of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body meets almost all statutory responsibilities but requirements in relation to reporting to parents for ICT in Years 10 and 11 are not fully met.

59. Excellent leadership with respect to inclusion is provided by the headteacher. This is complemented by very good management of special needs. There is a clear vision and this forms the basis for ensuring departments review and improve on what is already good practice. It is planned to spend approximately £20,000 more on special needs next year than is received by grant and through the funding formula. Governors are also urged to adopt inclusive policies. This ensures the school extends its inclusive approach through making appropriate provision to continue to secure the high standards already achieved.

60. Continuing professional development is very good. Through the partnerships with other schools, S. Peter's is able to draw on a wide range of expertise to provide professional development activities. Importantly, too, this also enables staff to develop their own expertise as trainers or course leaders and thus has a broader professional development dimension. The school's involvement in the national strategy for teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 has had a good impact on teachers' thinking and daily teaching as seen in the higher quality of teaching and learning in those years. The induction of new staff is very effective and newly qualified teachers value the support they are given. The school has a strong commitment to initial teacher training and, through strong links with a range of providers, has a steady flow of student teachers. These very good arrangements also help the school to recruit new teachers.

61. The school's finances are well managed. Recovery from a recent financial deficit has been effectively managed. The school has acted on the issues raised by the most recent auditors' reports. Financial inputs are around the national average while quality of education and achievement are very good in many respects, so the school provides very good value for money. It applies best value principles to its evaluation of its performance and to financial decision making but does not yet use to the full the financial benchmarking information available through the DfES.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,541,477
Total expenditure	3,644,255
Expenditure per pupil	3454

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	13724
Balance carried forward to the next	-88,342

Sixth form

62. Leadership and management are good overall. There is now a very clear commitment to further raising standards in the sixth form. Close attention is paid to the evaluation of student and departmental performance and the school is setting very challenging targets. These are well understood by teachers and students. The analysis of data on sixth form performance is good. However, the depth and sophistication of the response of subject leaders to the actions necessary to raise achievement in the sixth form is uneven. The arrangements for the long term management of the sixth form consortium are good but processes for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and learning are too reliant on the analysis of examination results and do not focus sufficiently on regular assurance of teaching quality and its impact on students' learning.

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

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Students attain well above average standards and their levels of achievement are very good.
- Students achieve very well because of their positive attitudes to the subject and their ability to work productively and independently in class and at home.
- Over the last two years standards have risen significantly by the end of Year 9 because of the very good leadership provided by the head of department.
- The monitoring of students' progress is not done rigorously and not all teachers are giving written guidance to students on how work could be improved.

63. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were high and a significant improvement on previous years. Attainment at the upper levels was exceptional. This was so for girls and boys, the latter having made noticeable gains in standards over the last two years. Achievement was very good for all groups of students.

64. The proportion of students attaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2003 English language examinations was well above average for boys and girls. These high standards have been maintained for some years now and represent very good achievement for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds. The English literature results were above average but fewer students attained at the highest A* and A grades than in recent years. Achievement overall in English literature was satisfactory.

65. The standard of written work seen during the course of the inspection was also well above average for all students by the time they reach the end of Years 9 and 11 and achievement remains high. They write fluently and accurately in a range of styles for different purposes. Computers are used for drafting and improving such writing. Students in Year 11 have developed good analytical skills and their critical writing on the set texts reveals a good understanding of form and content. Standards of reading, speaking and listening, and students' levels of achievement in developing these skills, are high. They are confident and articulate when giving presentations and engage fully in discussions. The climate for learning is conducive to such lively debate because students show respect for each other's contributions. In a Year 8 lesson on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where students asked perceptive and rigorous questions of fellow students taking on the role of key characters in the play, responses were well-informed and assured in an atmosphere of enjoyment and fun which led to very good learning. An increasingly challenging range of books is read as students move through the school and this makes a significant contribution to their moral and social awareness and their understanding of other cultures.

66. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 is very good because the head of department has worked effectively with her colleagues to develop challenging teaching approaches and raise standards. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good because students have been encouraged to develop independent study skills and they show initiative and application in the work they do in class and at home. Some of the teaching seen with the older students, however, lacked challenge. There were also occasions when no guidance was given to students on how to structure their own research and learning. There is no consistent approach in teachers' marking to inform students how to improve their work. Teachers know their subject well and they plan to meet the needs of students of all levels of competency. They have created very good working relationships with them. The excellent climate for learning in the department gives boys and girls the confidence to work

collaboratively as well as independently. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular provision which enriches and deepens all students' understanding of the subject. Those who are gifted in the subject benefit greatly from this provision.

67. The leadership provided by the head of department is very good. The focus she has brought to raising standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 has resulted in significant improvements in results over the last two years. She has evaluated the subject's performance over time and has in place appropriate priorities for its development. She has created a mutually supportive culture where the work of all teachers and students is valued and as a result morale is high. Her management of the subject is good. There are rigorous systems in place for monitoring teaching and spreading good practice. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection in standards, student behaviour, curriculum planning and the development of students' ability to work collaboratively and independently. The procedures for monitoring students' progress over time, however, are not yet strong enough and there is no consistent approach to marking. The department is aware of these areas for development and they feature in its improvement planning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

68. Students throughout the school have very good English language and literacy skills. They are able to adapt their writing to the needs of the curriculum. Extended writing is well organised and accurate. Students show knowledge and understanding of a range of texts, many containing specialist terminology, because of their well-developed reading skills. This was seen in history where they used specialist language with confidence. Students also read aloud confidently, fluently and with expression. Standards of literacy are particularly high in music with many opportunities provided for students to reflect on their work and to write extensively about the subject.

69. Oral skills are very well developed. Students explain themselves clearly at length, they can develop and amplify the points they make and they are able to engage effectively in discussions. They learn well because they are able to listen for extended periods of time and because they show respect for the contributions of other students. There is a strong emphasis in mathematics on developing their speaking skills and time is given for them to think and then explain what they know and understand. The provision for literacy is good in geography with opportunities provided for writing in various forms.

70. The literacy co-ordinator has promoted the sharing of good practice across departments and has clear priorities for future developments. The school is now developing a formal system to spot areas of weakness in students' literacy skills, target provision and then monitor its effectiveness. This is being done through regular meetings of a strategy team.

Modern foreign languages

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

Strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good levels of subject knowledge and proficiency.
- Teachers engender very good productive working relationships that promote good student achievement by the end of Year 9.
- Very good inspirational curriculum leadership ensures clarity of vision and sense of purpose.
- Lack of consistent access to ICT is limiting both teaching and learning strategies.
- The use of assessment to identify individual student curriculum targets and next steps is inadequate.

Commentary

71. Results in 2003 GCSE examinations are above average in French and well above average in Spanish in the attainment of A*-C grades. There has been an increase in the number of students gaining the higher grades. GCSE performance over the past three years has remained at a high level. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 are well above average at level 5 and level 6 in German and Spanish. Trends from 2001 to 2003 show that these high standards are being maintained.

72. Standards of work seen are above average by the end of Year 9. Students' listening and speaking skills are above average, whilst standards in writing are average. This represents good achievement overall, with higher attainers achieving well. By the end of Year 11, standards of work seen in both French and German are above average, which represents satisfactory achievement overall given the attainment levels at the beginning of Year 10. Boys and girls achieve similarly, with higher attainers achieving well in French and satisfactorily in German.

73. Teaching and learning overall are good. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good, with all teaching satisfactory or better with some very good teaching seen. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is satisfactory with some good teaching seen. Teachers have very good levels of subject knowledge and proficiency and engender good productive working relationships that promote good student achievement in lessons. The best teaching has very high levels of target language use and teachers demand active student participation. Very good teaching was seen in Year 7 Spanish and Year 9 French, where the teacher set up dialogue practice with students moving about and all actively using the foreign language. Good lessons are characterised by good support and challenge sustained by excellent relationships and rapport, where a brisk pace and changes of activity demonstrates that the teacher has clear outcomes in mind. In such lessons the teacher demonstrates a high-energy approach and gives good constructive feedback to students as to how to improve. Although lesson objectives are shared with students, many of these were not sufficiently focused. This means that students did not readily recognise their learning achievements during the lesson and over a sequence of lessons. Even less frequently were these objectives reviewed at the end of the lesson so that students would understand what they had learned and what they needed to do to improve further. Homework is not used consistently to reinforce learning objectives and provide a bridge to the next lesson. In general not enough opportunities were offered for independent and collaborative learning, though the lack of information and communication technology (ICT) in languages classrooms inhibits these approaches.

74. Curriculum leadership is very good and management is satisfactory. The head of department, only in post since September 2003, is knowledgeable, has exceptionally high aspirations and expectations both for herself and others, and sets a good example to students and staff. Most systems and processes have only been put in place since September 2003. Although there has been monitoring of performance data from examinations, the action plans produced have yet to be fully implemented. Indeed, a weakness of the department improvement plan is that outcomes are not sufficiently focused as to be able to be measured or demonstrated in many instances. Self-evaluation is embryonic with inconsistencies in levels of detail of planning and in the application of the departmental marking policy. There are inconsistencies in the quality and use of lesson objectives and in the use of assessment for planning for individual students. As a result students do not always understand what will lead to improvements in performance. Statutory performance management is in place, but there is little evidence of linkages between self-evaluation, performance management and staff development strategies. There is much potential for the identification and sharing of good practice to enhance performance levels.

75. Other factors having a beneficial impact upon students' achievements are the good programme of foreign visits and exchanges and teachers' commitment to a range of school activities of value to students, such as the activity day for gifted and talented students. However, the quantity and quality of accommodation and access to ICT facilities is unsatisfactory and is limiting both teaching and learning strategies. Some setting arrangements in Year 11 create gender imbalances, which in turn produce less than helpful classroom dynamics to the detriment of some students' learning. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in that there is now no

unsatisfactory teaching, the criticism of the Year 7 to 9 curriculum has been resolved, and higher attainers are achieving better. This is a fast improving department with much potential.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good curriculum including extra-curricular activities.
- There is good provision for the very able students in Years 10 and 11.
- Students' attitude to learning is good.
- Teaching and learning are good; standards are well above average and achievement is good.
- Teachers' day to day use of assessment information on students requires improvement.
- More opportunities are needed for students to improve their independent learning skills.

Commentary

76. The good curriculum enables students of all abilities to follow appropriate courses and attain standards that are well above average in all years. Additional classes to support students are proving very successful. An exciting new development using computers to log on to a school mathematics website will enable students to attempt revision questions and monitor their own progress. It is too early to judge its impact. The curriculum is also enhanced by the entry of the highest attaining Year 7 and Year 9 students into express groups where standards are very high in all topics. In Year 10, students are entered early for statistics GCSE and in the 2003 examinations standards were well above average. In the Year 11 express group, students are studying for advanced supplementary level in mathematics and standards are very high. The few students identified with special educational needs and those from different minority ethnic communities are well catered for. They achieve well in all year groups because they receive good quality support and guidance from their teachers. There are no significant variations between the attainment of boys and girls.

77. Across the school, students' attitude towards learning is good. They are keen learners, highly motivated and want to do well. This is a significant factor in explaining why students attain standards that are well above average. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average although compared to similar schools they were average. By the end of Year 9, students' national test results were also well above average. Compared to similar schools, test results are above average. In class, standards very rarely fall below average. In number, shape, space and measures and data handling standards overall are well above average. In problem solving and interpreting graphs standards fall very slightly but are above average. Standards in using and applying mathematics are average. This is because there are too few opportunities for students to develop these skills.

78. The quality of teaching and students' learning is good overall. Students' learning is enhanced by the teachers' good use of a range of resources in lessons. Students' understanding of topics improves when they are encouraged to use calculators to check answers. When computers are used to assist with explanations, students' understanding of topics improves considerably. Teachers' planning of lessons is particularly good and consequently students know what is expected of them. Teachers encourage students to talk about their work and listen to the explanations of others. They insist students use correct technical terms hence students' speaking and listening skills are well above average. There is limited evidence that computer skills are developed but where they are seen standards are average. Lessons are well structured and this enables students to make good progress and achieve well, particularly by the end of Year 9. By Year 11, students' achievement is satisfactory.

79. The more able students in middle ability groups make less progress than might be expected because work set does not fully challenge them. Their understanding of more complex topics is hindered because teachers provide insufficient time towards the end of the lesson for students to

attempt more difficult questions in different contexts. Teachers' ineffective use of day to day assessment information is the major reason why the achievement of students is not as high as their overall attainment. Too many students are given work that does not match their abilities and this is particularly true for students in Year 7. The lack of problem-solving opportunities and relatively few examples of students working investigatively hinders students' progress in improving their independent learning skills: hence standards in using and applying mathematics are lower than in other topics.

80. Leadership and management of the department are both satisfactory. The Head of Department is knowledgeable about the subject and committed to raising standards further. Although relatively new, he has made a good start in improving the departmental handbook and schemes of work and this is likely to contribute to achieving greater consistency of teaching within the department. Departmental planning identifies many potentially exciting initiatives but there is little reference to the impact they might have on students' learning. Methods for measuring the success of the plan are vague. Satisfactory improvements have been made since the last inspection. National test results in Year 9 remain well above average and GCSE results have improved. The previous inspection identified a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching but none was seen during this inspection. Assessment procedures have not improved and departmental planning still has shortcomings

Mathematics across the curriculum

81. Students' numeracy on entry to the school is above average. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11 standards of numeracy overall are well above average. Good progress is made in improving number skills. Students are highly numerate, manipulating numbers confidently and in many different contexts. In geography students construct and interpret graphs, charts and tables very well and higher ability students use advanced statistical methods. In business studies students use surveys effectively. In history population graphs are used well and students extract data from a range of databases very effectively. In modern foreign languages, there are missed opportunities to practice number work.

82. The teaching of numeracy is good overall. The mathematics department is committed to improving further standards of numeracy and is adopting ideas from the national strategy for teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 but there remain inconsistencies in this approach. Some teachers do not provide mental mathematics starters to lessons and review sessions at the end of the lesson do not always take place. Improved liaison with partner primary schools is taking place but as yet has not had a significant impact as too much work in Year 7 is too easy for some students. Introductions to lessons are brisk but there are few opportunities for students to improve their mental mathematics. All staff have received training in numeracy across the curriculum and the maths handbook provides useful and helpful examples of where numeracy skills might be developed in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A high proportion of very good teaching leads to very good learning and high standards.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Staff are enthusiastic and committed to high standards and continued improvement.
- Policy for marking and the setting of short term targets is not clear.
- Students have a very positive attitude to their studies.

83. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were slightly down on those of 2002 but the trend over the last three years is a rising one and is rising faster than the national trend. Indeed the

slight drop in 2003 followed an exceptional rise in 2002. Results over three years are well above national averages and this represents very good achievement. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national averages and the trend over the last three years is an impressively rising one. Girls achieved slightly better than boys but both boys and girls achieved significantly better results in science than the other core subjects. This again represents very good achievement. The high standards and very good achievement are clearly evident in students' current work.

84. Teaching and learning overall are very good. In over half the lessons seen the teaching was very good and was good or better in three-quarters: there were no unsatisfactory lessons. Lessons are very well prepared, teachers' subject knowledge is very good and teachers often use this knowledge to give interesting background to the work to increase its relevance to the students. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and this enthusiasm is transmitted to the students. In Year 10 in a very good lesson on forces students were asked to measure the effect of force on the distance travelled by an object, given just a broad outline of the task and challenged to produce some meaningful measurements and develop the experimental technique. The students responded with a will, worked hard and co-operatively and obtained some good results with some students developing the experimental technique in a very imaginative manner. At the end of the lesson the most successful group was able to explain what it had achieved to the remainder of the class, who listened courteously. All students learned a lot from this imaginative approach to the problem.

85. There were no lessons in which learning was less than satisfactory but there were examples of very well prepared lessons failing to achieve their full learning potential because they were too teacher-focused and the students were not given as great a challenge as they might have been. The attitude of the students is never less than good and there is a real determination to learn. There is a strong emphasis on the practical aspects of the subject and students of all attainment levels have very good laboratory skills. ICT facilities are very good and are used very effectively to enhance students' learning. There is good use of Power Point for presentations and the development of the 'learning platform' is providing an invaluable resource for students. Both teaching and learning are enhanced by the imaginative use of ICT by the teachers. There is a wide and imaginative number of activities and clubs provided by members of the department to stimulate the interest of students and this variety is indicative of the enthusiasm and commitment of the team of teachers.

86. Leadership and management of the department are very good with the head of department setting a high standard of commitment and enthusiasm, shared by her colleagues, with the whole department welded together to form a very effective team. Laboratory technicians are integral members of this team and provide excellent support for the teachers. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are very good with teachers making very good use of the data from tests and examinations. Students' work is marked regularly with some helpful comment to aid improvement. However the system for grading of the work in exercise books and providing students with helpful short-term targets is not working well and the meaning of marks and grades is not clear. The accommodation for science is good and the resources for learning are very good. The department makes an exceptional contribution to a local quality circle and, as part of the school's work as a technology college, is very actively involved in sharing and spreading good practice amongst a variety of local schools.

87. Since the last inspection the department has made very good progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning results in well above average GCSE results.
- Very good planning and organisation provides a strong basis for teaching and learning.
- Good resources and accommodation improve learning opportunities.

- There is good use of ICT across the curriculum and this is continuing to improve.
- There is not enough progress in ICT by all students in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

88. Teacher assessment data for the last five years show that standards have steadily improved and are now well above average. These results compare well with other subjects but more girls than boys are attaining the higher levels. Standards in Year 11, for those students taking GCSE ICT, have remained well above average for the last three years and results in this subject for 2003 are amongst the best in the school. For those Year 11 students taking GNVQ courses the results in 2003 are below average.

89. By the time students are in Year 9 their achievement is good. Students are aware of the social issues associated with ICT; they work confidently with presentation software, spreadsheets and logos and are doing better than the expectation for their age. In science lessons students use sensors for measuring and recording and in design and technology they use on screen robots for responding to and controlling events. There is a good emphasis on improving students' literacy through ICT but much less obvious is the attention given to numeracy. The achievement of students taking a separate ICT examination course in Years 10 and 11 is good. However, the depth of coverage of ICT skills for the majority of students in Years 10 and 11 who do not take such a course is uneven. This means that achievement for Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.

90. Teaching and learning are good overall but are often very good. This is as a result of very good planning and organisation that ensures good learning opportunities. Lessons start promptly with students seated at central tables where objectives and procedures are made clear. Accommodation, computers and displays are very good and make a strong contribution to the students' learning. Frequent use is made of the planning and resources from the national strategy for teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 which is having a good influence on outcomes. Lessons proceed with teachers presenting the topics in a lively and enthusiastic manner that readily engages the students and promotes good learning.

91. Leadership and management are very good. Analysis of examination results is thorough and a plan is made that is acted upon. There is a good development plan that sets targets based on improving standards and with outcomes that are easily identified. There is an effective monitoring system that is contributing to the improvement in teaching and learning. Technical support in the school is well organised and managed and makes a strong contribution to students' learning opportunities. Very good progress has been made in resolving issues raised in the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

92. ICT across the curriculum is good and there is an increasing use of ICT in all subjects. It is good in design and technology, history and science but better access is needed for music, geography and for modern foreign languages. All subjects plan for the use of ICT, there is a good range of subject specific software and there is good out of class ICT access in the library and in the two ICT rooms.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Students' very good behaviour, attitudes and relationships with each other and their teachers have a very positive effect on learning.
- Higher attainers are not challenged enough in some teaching groups.

- Access to information and communications technology is limited and does not meet the learning needs of all students.

Commentary

93. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 show them to be above the national average. GCSE results were above the national average in 2003 but well above in 2001 and 2002. Results have seen an upward trend since the last inspection.

94. Standards improve as students move through the school. Good gains are made during Years 8 and 9 and students achieve well. This is a result of very good teaching which pays attention to building up knowledge and geographical skills. All students make good progress in relation to their earlier attainment, including those with special educational needs. This is due to the high levels of support given to students during lessons both by teachers and support staff. Higher attaining students make good progress overall but do not achieve very highly because there are few opportunities for independent learning and enrichment.

95. Students continue to make good progress throughout Years 10 and 11. They build well on the solid foundation of knowledge and skills laid in earlier years and many topics are revisited. All students have a very good understanding of both physical and human geography. They are able to describe cause and effect and link process with accuracy. The quality of GCSE coursework is often outstanding. This is because students' skills of analysis and evaluation are well developed and they receive appropriate guidance linked to examination requirements.

96. Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are highly qualified and know their subject well. This enables them to explain difficult concepts clearly and simply and as a result students learn quickly in the majority of lessons. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students of all levels of attainment and the pace is often brisk. An excellent range of well planned field trips supports the curriculum very well. In Years 10 and 11 the quality of teaching is also very good. Assessment is very effective. Students know how to improve and are given appropriate guidance to help them achieve the higher grades. They are also given opportunities to evaluate their own work and the work of others. The teachers are helped in targeting the work by the very clear judgements they make of what students can do. Students use their ICT skills in their coursework and homework but provision for the use of ICT in the classroom is patchy. There are few opportunities for group work within the classroom.

97. The head of department is an effective curriculum manager. He is committed to raising standards and has a clear vision for improving examination success. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are higher and teaching and learning have improved. Some inconsistency in the way teachers approach planning, preparation and the overall approach to learning remains and there is a need to share good practice and to work together to achieve greater consistency, particularly with regard to meeting the needs of higher attaining students.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students achieve well in their acquisition of historical skills.
- Leadership is very good and has ensured an accurate evaluation of departmental performance.
- Teaching is good and teachers have a very secure command of their subject.
- Students use ICT effectively for personal research.
- The assessment of students' National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 is often inaccurate
- Few students opt for the GCSE course.

Commentary

98. Although there were few students entered for GCSE in 2003, their results were above average and continued the upward trend in examination performance for the past three years. All students reached their estimated grades and attained at least as well as in their other subjects. Similarly, standards are above average at the end of Year 9 with some very high achievement. Students handle historical sources with confidence and can use historical terminology accurately and in context.

99. Students make good progress in understanding how historians work and also in gauging the value of the range of evidence from which they make their judgements. In Year 7 students are already exposed to source material and can ask perceptive questions of it, in relation to how the medieval church offered people hope that they would get to heaven. Students who find much of the subject matter difficult also achieve well and a minority of Year 8 students in lower sets are producing effective extended writing. In the GCSE years, students are demonstrating good achievement in research skills and use ICT most effectively to come to convincing conclusions about attitudes to poverty in the nineteenth century.

100. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers work hard to use methods which meet the learning needs of their students. The use of film footage from *The World at War* series gave students in Year 11 a different perspective to the home front in Britain and to why propaganda was so important during the Second World War. The choice of resources, *Generals Die in Bed* for a Year 9 lesson on trench warfare, demonstrated the very secure subject knowledge of teachers. However, in a minority of lessons, though teaching is satisfactory, the pace is slower, realistic challenge is not always present and students' engagement with their work diminishes as a result.

Example of outstanding practice

This was a year 8 lesson on the English Civil War for lower attaining students on why so many people were shocked by the events of the Civil War

The action started as soon as students arrived with a most thought-provoking 'starter'. This task and immediate feedback from the teacher set the scene for an excellent lesson. The use of drama and pictorial sources, the electric pace and the relentless challenge fascinated students to such an extent that they were desperate to answer questions and become fully involved. They were so engaged by the teacher's approach and had so many opportunities to learn in their own way that they were delighted to watch the playlets of their peers and expressed real joy at the success of everyone.

101. Leadership is very good and the head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject, following a detailed evaluation of current performance. Management is good and teachers recognise that the popularity of the subject at GCSE is lower than desired and that students' reported National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 are, in fact, much higher than departmental data suggests. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection in relation to the quality of teaching, standards in Years 7 to 9 and in the overall progress made by students.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well and by the end of Year 11 standards are well above average overall.
- Teaching is good overall and explains why students do well by the time they leave school.
- The subject is led and managed very effectively: attention to detail, building on tradition and a strong commitment to maintaining high standards and raising them further all contribute very effectively.

- The curriculum provides a very broad range of opportunities and experiences so that students are motivated and interested in their work.
- Assessment information and data are not used sufficiently to plan the next stage of learning or to ensure that work is matched accurately to students' needs.
- The partnerships with other schools and organisations enhance the quality of the provision.

Commentary

102. The 2003 GCSE results are well above average and by the end of Year 11, students achieve very well compared with their prior attainment. Examination performance has been consistently high for the last four or five years. Good teaching, students' positive attitudes to their work and very effective leadership all contribute effectively to these high standards. The proportion of students gaining the top grades is nearly 30 per cent above the average. This represents very good achievement: compared with the high standards achieved at the end Year 9, students do very well and all gain a GCSE pass with nearly 80 per cent gaining the higher (A*-C) grades.

103. Inspection evidence confirms broadly the examination results: the work seen in lessons was of high quality especially in Years 10 and 11 and students' achievement is very good. Lower down the school, in Years 7, 8 and 9, students also achieve well and gain the necessary skills to tackle the more advanced work of Years 10 and 11. They apply these skills well developing some innovative and creative ideas using traditional and modern construction techniques. In both food and textiles standards are equally high: again students learn the basics early on and teachers build on these very successfully. The Year 11 GCSE course work in textiles, for example, is of very high quality and shows attention to detail, an understanding of the needs of the consumer and originality. There are examples of similar high quality work in all of the areas covered by the subject. In resistant materials students produce a wide range of products often showing a high level of skill. Often the quality of presentation is good, particularly in graphics where students learn to use a range of techniques successfully. Good teaching, interesting activities and attention to detail all promote students' attitudes to learning and their achievements effectively.

104. Standards and achievement are almost as good by the end of Year 9. Here, standards of work are above average and this represents a solid improvement from Year 7: students achieve well relative to their starting point. Again, the attention to detail and the emphasis on skills gives students a thorough grounding and provides a good basis for completing their examination courses successfully.

105. Teaching is good overall and promotes students' attitudes to their work well. As a result, learning is also good and students generally put a good deal of effort into their work. A particular feature of the teaching is the way teachers organise their lessons carefully and provide a clear structure in which students can work. This is one of the main reasons why they achieve so well. Another reason is that teachers have a good command of their subject: they are often experts and teach the correct skills and techniques carefully. Similarly, teachers have good relationships with their classes: as a result students are well behaved, motivated and enthusiastic. In many lessons, particularly those that are good and very good, teachers set clear expectations of what is required and explain the work very carefully. As a result, students are focused on their tasks and make swift gains in their understanding of and their skills in working different materials. Another quality in the very good teaching is the way the different approaches are used throughout the lesson. In a very good Year 8 lesson, for example, a range of different approaches were used, including whole class instruction, work in small groups and individual work. This kept the pace of learning very brisk and meant that students were never allowed to become bored. In some classes teachers are careful to explain technical words, often writing them on the board and referring to them during the lesson. However, there is a slight weakness here: not all lessons featured this technique and opportunities to reinforce literacy were sometimes missed.

106. Another weakness in teaching is that assessment is not used to inform the next stage of learning. Often, teachers have very good knowledge of their students and their learning needs but this does not always feed into what they expect to be learnt or achieved by the end of the lesson. In

a few lessons, for example, some students were capable of working at a higher level but this had not been taken into account fully in the plans. It is these relatively few weaknesses that make teaching good rather than very good.

107. Leadership and management are very good. Clear vision for the subject, a commitment to improvement, and good expertise all help to create a strong and effective team of teachers. The subject also plays a very important part in the success of the school as a Technology College. Teachers, through the Technology College, have established very strong links with partner schools and a wide range of other organisations. The subject contributes very substantially to the development of the technology in the locality and the school is well-established as the Centre for Design and Technology Education (CDATE). This involvement makes a significant difference to students' learning and achievement. The department makes a strong contribution to initial teacher training through its links with local colleges and training organisations. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement by the end of Year 9 is good.
- Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were well above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good; teachers are very well-informed and show good command of areas of learning.
- Assessing, recording and tracking systems lack rigour.
- Students have limited access to ICT resources in the art studios.

108. Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is below average. They make slow progress throughout their first year, but the standard of their work improves in Year 8 and by the end of Year 9 the standard of their work is in line with national expectations and achievement is good.

109. In the 2003 GCSE examination the proportion of students achieving A*-C grades was well above the national average. These results show that students' performance in art tended to be higher than in the other subjects that they took that year. Girls' attainment was much higher than that of girls nationally. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good.

110. Teaching is good overall and there are some very good features. Teachers are very well informed and show good command of areas of learning. Management of students is usually good, but there are occasions when too much idle chatter is tolerated during lessons, which has an adverse impact on achievement and standards. Teachers have high expectations of students, all of whom are expected to work to the best of their ability. Homework is set and marked, but not on a sufficiently regular basis to promote learning.

111. Students' learning is good. The majority of students enjoy working on the tasks that have been set by their teachers and operate in a disciplined manner. They work with concentration to acquire new knowledge and develop new skills in drawing, painting and craftwork. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into teaching groups and make good progress. In Years 10 and 11, students are beginning to work with increasing independence to communicate ideas and concepts through art and design.

112. Leadership is very good and management good. The head of department has a very clear vision of how she would like to see the department develop. She is a very good role model for staff and students and relationships are excellent. She is involved regularly in meetings with other heads

of departments from other schools. Assessing, recording and tracking systems are lacking in rigour at present, which has an adverse impact on the quality of feedback that is provided for students.

113. Accommodation is good. There are two large open studios plus two smaller annexes, one of which is used for clay work, the other for ICT. The two large studios are in need of refurbishment to create an environment that is more conducive to learning. Resources are good, appropriate to the needs of students who operate within a highly traditional model of the curriculum. However, provision of computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers is inadequate. Improvement since the last inspection is good and students in Year 11 continue to make very good progress.

Drama

114. Drama is taught as part of the English curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 and as a discrete subject in Years 10 and 11. It was not inspected in detail and a limited sample of lessons was seen. At the time of the inspection there was one GCSE drama group in Year 10.

115. The subject makes a significant contribution to the high standards attained in English by the end of Year 9. This is because students explore ideas and issues by using a variety of dramatic techniques and in the process understand the interaction of character and action and the way atmosphere and tension are developed. This enables them to appreciate with greater sensitivity the texts they read as well as improving their basic communication skills. This was seen in an excellent Year 8 lesson where the work undertaken by the students on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was of a very high standard. The teaching in that lesson was inspiring.

116. Students in Year 10 are progressing well and standards are above average. They have an understanding of dramatic terms and use a range of different styles in their work. Performance skills are highly developed and students have an awareness of place, occasion and audience. Levels of achievement in drama are good. Overall, the teaching, leadership and management of the subject are good.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained by students in Year 11 are well above average.
- Teaching is very good and as a result students' achievement is very good.
- Extra curricular provision is outstanding giving students a very wide range of musical opportunities.
- Leadership of the subject is very good ensuring the highest possible musical opportunities for all students.
- Accommodation and resource limitations restrict what can be taught in some lessons.

Commentary

117. Standards are above average for all students at the end of Year 9, including those who are gifted and talented, or who have special educational needs. Students' musical ability is average on entry to the school and their achievement by the end of Year 9 is very good. Results at GCSE have been consistently well above average for the last three years. The work in the current Year 11 shows that this standard is being maintained. Their achievement is also very good.

118. Standards are now higher than at the time of the last inspection for students at the end of Year 9, and have been maintained for those in Year 11, with a higher proportion of students attaining the higher grades. Teachers know their students very well and there is no longer any difference in the progress made by boys compared to girls. Students in Year 9 use musical language well, and their ensemble work is impressive. By Year 11 they build on earlier musical knowledge, producing

compositions which are written for large ensembles. These pieces display their clear understanding of modulation, harmonic progression and a variety of musical styles.

119. Students achieve well because of the consistently very good and challenging teaching. This is characterised by the very good musical knowledge and high expectations of the teachers, which ensure that students enjoy their lessons and are motivated to do their best. They have very good attitudes in lessons. Working relationships are strong; students are all involved and work hard to support each other through paired and group work. Regular written evaluations, which enable students to understand how to achieve high grades and evaluate their work, ensure that they reflect thoroughly at the end of each unit of work. Because students' levels of literacy and their use of musical language are very high, they are able to analyse their strengths and weaknesses. The accommodation has shortcomings as there are insufficient practice rooms for visiting instrumental staff and for students to use during group work. This, combined with the lack of computer equipment in one music room, restricts the variety of activities that can be undertaken.

120. Leadership and management are very good. Teamwork is strong and there is a consistency of approach combined with a clear sense of direction and purpose. Teachers, including visiting instrumental teachers, give freely of their time to support each other. The musical opportunities provided for students through extra-curricular and instrumental work are outstanding. A large number of students receive lessons and enjoy a vast range of opportunities to make music together in school, local community and abroad. The music department's deservedly high reputation for musical concerts and performances has been maintained. Standards have risen since the previous inspection. As a result improvement has been very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and achievement is good overall from 11-16.
- A strong team of well-qualified and committed staff deliver a broad curriculum.
- Attitudes, behaviour and teachers' relationships with students are very good and this has a very positive effect on learning.
- Students have a very well-developed capacity to evaluate performance but teachers' tracking of progress towards targets for individual students is not yet fully established.
- Community partnerships and extra-curricular activities are outstanding and support good achievement in lessons.
- Monitoring of teaching and self-evaluation lack consistency and development planning is not sharply enough focused.
- Teacher assessments in Year 9 need to be more rigorous as does feedback to GCSE students on their written work.

Commentary

121. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Many students are working above national expectations, especially in swimming, gymnastics and dance for boys and in girls' football, where fluency and control are very good. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also good. In the core provision in Years 10 and 11, notably in badminton and the Junior Sports Leaders Award (JSLA) course, students are working at above average levels. GCSE standards were average in 2003. The boys' results in 2003 were well above the national average but the girls' were well below, although few girls took the course. Standards are affected by the lack of a dedicated base for theory teaching and because feedback to students on written work is not sufficiently rigorous and systematic.

122. In Years 7 to 9 achievement is good overall with some very good aspects such as swimming. Students make at least good and sometimes very good progress in most lessons with the most able challenged well by judicious grouping. In Years 10 and 11 achievement continues to be at least good with some very good achievement in the JSLA course. On the GCSE course achievement is satisfactory both in practical and theory work.

123. Teaching is good overall. All teaching is at least satisfactory with just over half being very good. The best teaching has well informed planning including specific provision for gifted and talented students and structured activities providing appropriate challenges. Relationships in lessons are very good. Lessons are highly paced, involve effective use of resources and provide opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning. Where it is less successful, teaching lacks focus and rigour. Inconsistent implementation of planning does not always support progress for all students. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are over-generous. Teaching at GCSE shows encouraging signs of greater consistency, which is beginning raise standards.

124. Learning is good. Students acquire skills, knowledge and understanding well where clear exposition and summary make the learning objectives explicit. Students' application and productivity, encouraged by the very positive climate for learning, are very good. Students have a very good capacity to work together, to evaluate informatively and to take responsibility.

125. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has identified and acted upon a number of issues arising from the relative under-performance of a small number of girls at GCSE in 2003. Planning is thorough, resources are well organised and well looked after. The department has taken steps towards the incorporation of information and communication technology but lacks expertise and technical support. Teachers give generously of their time to extra-curricular activities, which are very well supported by students.

126. Partnerships with a variety of other schools are a very positive feature. Students gain socially from the experience of working with others in this context. The JSLA course is a constructive addition to the year 10 and 11 programme providing a focus for those who have a vocational interest in sport and leisure. It provides students with valuable experience of leadership and communication skills and builds on the work in lower years aimed at developing students' capacity to evaluate and take responsibility for their learning.

127. Since the previous inspection standards in the core provision in Years 10 and 11 have risen. The breadth of the curriculum has improved for all students in Years 7 to 11. Accommodation has greatly improved with the building of the sports arena in partnership with Wolverhampton Wanderers which has enabled broader curriculum provision and diminished the impact of bad weather on learning.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies was inspected in detail. A lesson in GNVQ intermediate health and social care was seen in which students were fully engaged by the work of an enthusiastic and very well prepared teacher. High expectations and challenging questions ensured good achievement by all in the group.

Provision for business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students on the current applied GCSE course are achieving high standards.
- Teaching and learning, especially on the applied course, are good with well motivated students working productively in and out of lessons.
- Evaluation of the department's strengths, weaknesses and its performance is very good.
- Industry links and business links are very good and provide students with an insight into the world of business.
- Accommodation has not kept pace with the expansion of the subject and some lessons are conducted in inappropriate classrooms.

Commentary

128. The recent financial unit results for the new applied GCSE course are outstanding with 83 per cent achieving grades A*-C. With the other two portfolio units having been assessed, final results for these Year 11 students will be of a similar outcome. This is in contrast to the 2003 traditional GCSE results which were disappointing with approximately 30 per cent achieving grades A*-C, well below the national average. A careful analysis of current Year 11 performance and a number of relevant policies have now been put in place with the intention of preventing similar underachievement from the equivalent group in 2004. The applied business students show an aptitude for the practical nature of the course, are very well served with business contacts and are very competent and confident users of ICT. Students generally are well behaved and instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with with a minimum of fuss.

129. The inspection was conducted while two of the three full-time members of staff were absent with illness and it is testament to the management skills of the head of department that the teaching arrangements were handled efficiently and supply staff were deployed effectively.

130. Coursework on the vocational courses is assessed very competently with staff having a very good understanding of the qualification's assessment requirements. Analysis of students' work, discussion with students and observation of students with the head of department and the supply teachers indicates that teaching and learning are good on the vocational courses but that there is some lack of pace and challenge on the traditional GCSE courses. Marking practice is inconsistent on the GCSE courses which do not benefit from the detailed assessment grids found on the vocational courses.

131. Current curriculum time for the applied business course is limited to two hours in Year 10, less than desirable to ensure coverage of the course and less than other similar courses at the school. There is just one dedicated business room, with only seven computers, the department having expanded considerably, with lessons often being held in classrooms which do not provide an appropriate learning environment.

132. Leadership and management of the department are good with very clear and continuing evaluation of departmental performance. The department's development plan, whilst in line with the school's key developmental areas, is not sufficiently rigorous and focused on measurable outcomes to improve performance effectively. There are very well developed industry links and business initiatives which are used to reinforce students' understanding of key business topics. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership for citizenship is good, showing clear understanding of how the subject should develop.
- PSHE is well planned across the school.
- All subject departments identify clearly links with the citizenship strands.
- Students' positive attitudes and participation in many areas of school life contribute to their understanding of citizenship.
- In PSHE and citizenship lessons teaching and learning seen were good in Years 10, 11 and 12 but satisfactory in years 7 to 9 where some students lacked commitment and found aspects of the work unchallenging.

Commentary

133. Standards attained at the end of Years 9 and 11 are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. Year 11 students talk clearly and enthusiastically about their understanding of European Union, linked to work on British democratic society. During the inspection, it was not possible to observe any specific citizenship lessons. Citizenship is taught alongside other strands within the personal, social and health education programme, by a team of form tutors led by a team leader. There has been a comprehensive audit of citizenship by subject departments, which is thorough and often translated into practice during lessons. For example a Junior Sports Leader Award lesson for Year 10 students promoted initiative, organizational and leadership qualities through communication. Because the lesson was very well taught, students developed a clear understanding through practical application of these key concepts. Other examples include a registration for Year 11 students, where the time was used to discuss and explore courtesy, consideration and co-operation. Students listened to each other attentively as their peers explained how they had increased their understanding of these areas, during their visits to a special school. A sex education lesson in Year 12 was greatly enhanced by an excellent drama presentation by students on unplanned pregnancy. Where students found sessions less engaging this arose because some did not give full commitment to the subject and the material, while relevant, was seen by students in some sessions to be superficial.

134. Subject leaders have developed a well-planned citizenship and PSHE programme. Priorities for development are clear, including a more structured system for assessing and reporting students' progress, involving all subject areas as well as during citizenship lessons. The team approach to citizenship and PSHE ensures that staff are usually confident teaching the subject, and supported with carefully chosen resources. However, at present it is not possible for team leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection 13 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 AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	12	92	N/A	0	N/A	30.0	N/A
Biology	34	73.5	N/A	32.4	N/A	29.7	N/A
Business Studies	11	91	N/A	18.2	N/A	35.5	N/A
VCE Business	9	100	N/A	0	N/A	26.6	N/A
Chemistry	23	78.3	N/A	26.1	N/A	30.9	N/A
Drama	7	86	N/A	0	N/A	27.1	N/A
Economics	2	100	N/A	0	N/A	30.0	N/A
English Language and literature	19	100	N/A	10.5	N/A	32.8	N/A
English Literature	18	100	N/A	50	N/A	42.6	N/A
Design and technology	8	100	N/A	63	N/A	46.3	N/A
Food technology	8	88	N/A	25	N/A	35.0	N/A
Textiles	4	100	N/A	0	N/A	30.0	N/A
Geography	37	83.8	N/A	30	N/A	32.7	N/A
German	8	87.5	N/A	25	N/A	33.8	N/A
History	5	100	N/A	20	N/A	26.0	N/A
Information technology	28	79	N/A	0	N/A	22.1	N/A
Mathematics	31	77	N/A	32	N/A	31.6	N/A
Further mathematics	13	85	N/A	8	N/A	26.2	N/A
Music	7	100	N/A	28.6	N/A	37.1	N/A
Other Sciences - Electronics	13	100	N/A	62	N/A	45.4	N/A
Classical Civilisation	3	100	N/A	100	N/A	60	N/A
Law	1	100	N/A	0	N/A	30.0	N/A
Psychology	5	100	N/A	0	N/A	30.0	N/A
Physics	42	71.4	N/A	9.5	N/A	24.0	N/A
Religious Studies	9	100	N/A	22	N/A	47.1	N/A
Sociology	5	80	N/A	20	N/A	32.0	N/A
Spanish	9	33.3	N/A	11.1	N/A	11.11	N/A
Physical Education	13	85	N/A	62	N/A	38	N/A

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
Art and design	12	100	98.6	33.3	50.2	61.7	87.5
Biology	31	96.8	96.4	22.6	39.2	72.9	78.6
Business Studies (GCE)	12	100	98.7	16.7	36.8	76.7	80.1
Business (VCE)	19	100	88.6	40.5	20.6	85.9	60.1
Chemistry	14	100	97.6	35.7	49	77.1	84.9
Classical Studies	1	100	99.5	0	55.9	80	90.9
Communication Studies	1	100	99.4	100	37.8	100	82.1
Drama	14	100	99.5	14.3	40.1	70	83.6
Economics	3	100	98.9	66.7	52	93.3	88.3
English/English Language	22	100	99.4	22.7	36.3	77.3	80.9
English Literature	31	100	99.5	41.9	46.5	86.5	86.5
French	5	100	98.8	60	51.5	96	87.6
Design and technology	8	100	97.8	12.5	35	65	77.9
Geography	30	100	98.7	53.3	44.5	91.3	84
German	6	100	98.4	16.7	47.9	70	84.8
Health and Social Care	19	100	93.2	5.3	22.3	58.9	63.5
History	5	100	99	60	44.6	84	84.6
Information technology	20	100	95.6	10	24.6	62	69.5
Leisure and Recreation	6	83.3	88.1	33.3	15	66.7	57.9
Mathematics	38	92.1	96.7	39.5	55.6	78.9	88.8
Music	7	100	98.8	28.6	38.9	85.7	81.1
Other languages	1	100	96.9	0	64.5	80	93.8
Other science – Electronics	6	100	97.3	100	41.5	110	80.3
Physics	22	100	96.7	27.3	44.6	75.5	81.7
Religious Studies	7	100	98.8	57.1	46.7	94.3	85.6
Sociology	1	100	98.2	100	44.3	120	83.6
Sports/PE studies	15	86.7	98	20	30.9	60	75.2

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	6	100		50		0	

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because students work hard to meet teachers' high expectations.
- The quality of teaching is good - teachers have good subject knowledge and use a variety of interesting approaches.
- Some students are not well informed about the rigours of the English Literature/Language AS level examination.

Commentary

135. Students benefit from being able to elect for a combined English literature/Language course or a more specialised English Literature course. Numbers vary over the years and there is no discernable pattern of trend in terms of popularity. Standards attained by Year 13 students in the 2003 AS and A level examinations were broadly in line with the national average. This represents good achievement given the wide range of prior attainment in English on entry to the sixth form in Year 12. Some students achieve the highest grades of A/B, while all who complete the courses secure at least a pass grade.

136. Lesson observations and examination of students work during the inspection show that most students are achieving well. Most students come to lessons expecting to work hard. Teachers have high expectations. Students respond well in lessons and their learning is good. A few students are not punctual to lessons, and do not attend all that they should and this affects their achievement.

137. The quality of teaching is good. The atmosphere in every lesson seen was positive. Relationships are respectful. Teaching is accurate, reflecting secure subject knowledge. Appropriate use is made of information and communication technology by teachers and students. In the best lessons activities are varied and challenging, with the lesson moving along at a cracking pace. In one Year 12 lesson on Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* all the students worked very effectively within their small groups, culminating in a series of cameo performances using role play and dramatic techniques. They all enjoyed this because they were actively engaged throughout.

138. There are some shortcomings in teaching. Planning does not always ensure that work is pitched at the right level for all students. While students are identified as having special educational needs or as 'gifted and talented' it is not always apparent what provision is being made to meet their individual needs. Methods used lack variety in some lessons, with teachers not involving students enough in their learning and spending too long talking to them. The spacious and attractively busy rooms are sometimes not used well to facilitate paired and group work. Marking is regular and detailed but does not clearly set out specific targets for improvement.

139. Sound progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards remain in line with national expectations. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear drive to raise standards. The well qualified and experienced teachers work well as a team and work hard to provide students with all the resources that they need.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

140. Provision for the development of key skills in language and literacy across the curriculum is good and standards are in line with expectations for students studying at post-sixteen level. There is evidence in subjects like English that students are encouraged to use literacy skills to improve the

quality of their written work and oral discussions. When this happens such skills support their learning and enable them to achieve well in their examination courses. Students studying physical education are confident and articulate when evaluating their own and others' work and they have developed very good analytical skills. This was also seen in art where students communicated effectively with each other and the teacher because of their fluent and precise use of specialist terms.

Modern foreign languages

German was inspected in detail; French and Spanish were sampled.

141. Provision in French and Spanish is satisfactory. In 2003, A level French results were above average and AS Spanish results below average. Standards of work seen are average and the achievement of students is satisfactory. Sixth Form teaching is good. High levels of appropriate target language are used and teachers show themselves to be highly proficient and fluent. Lessons are very well structured. Teachers engender very good and productive working relationships that promote student achievement. However, inconsistent access to ICT is limiting learner autonomy and affecting standards. Curriculum leadership is good with clarity of vision and a sense of purpose. Management is satisfactory. The head of department, only in post since September 2003, is knowledgeable, has exceptionally high aspirations and expectations both for herself and others, and sets a good example to students and staff. She has led a very thorough analysis of departmental performance and an action plan has been implemented that shows signs of leading to improvement.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and staff have a native speaker's command of the language and use the language extensively during lessons.
- Standards are rising, achievement is good and the oral proficiency of most students is above average.
- Relationships between students and between students and teachers are very good and there are high levels of interest and motivation; learning is good.

Commentary

142. Although the percentage of students gaining A and B grades was below average in the 2003 A-level examinations, all those entered reached pass level. The performance of female students exceeded that of their male colleagues. Advanced Supplementary results in the same year were average.

143. Work seen during the inspection shows improving standards. Students are achieving well in both written and oral assignments and standards are above average overall. Most students react quickly to German spoken at speed and the extent of their vocabulary is better than would normally be expected. Furthermore, students use a range of idiomatic language and those of higher competence use complex grammatical constructions accurately and with confidence.

144. Teaching is good and students are immersed in German for most of each lesson. Staff have an excellent command of the language and, because students imitate their pronunciation closely, their abilities in oral German are improving markedly. In addition, students benefit from a weekly conversation class with the school's German assistant. Students thoroughly enjoy their lessons and have a profound respect for the talents and industry of their teachers, of whom they speak highly.

145. Leadership and management are good and ensure that students are exposed to many aspects of German culture. For example, sixth formers take part in the annual exchange programme with students from Dachau and benefit also from a wide range of resources related to contemporary life in Germany. The department has made good improvements since the last inspection and is well placed for further success.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and leads to good achievement.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good; as a result students are well motivated and confident learners.
- The provision of A level courses, including opportunities for gifted and talented students, is good and a high proportion of students complete A level courses.
- The provision of suitable mathematics courses for students who were not entered for higher level GCSE mathematics in Year 11 is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

146. In 2003 the results at A level were below average in comparison with national standards. The results in 2002 were above the national average. With the exception of 2002, there has been a downward trend in the results at A level since the last inspection. The attainment of students currently studying A level is above average.

147. The teaching of mathematics A level courses is good overall and some is excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well using a variety of teaching strategies that recognise students' different learning styles. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Teachers create a good learning environment in which students are confident and well motivated to take an active part in lessons. Students offer solutions and explanations to challenging questions; they work together cooperatively and collaboratively and demonstrate the ability to apply previous learning in a new context. As a result their learning and achievement are good and a high proportion of students complete the two year A level courses.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 12 mechanics lesson was expertly planned to use students' differing learning styles and all 24 students in the class were fully and actively involved throughout. The teacher's introductory demonstration of a pulley system made use of both visual and auditory learning. Students responded to the teacher's excellent questioning to predict motion within the system, to analyse the forces within it and to identify any assumptions within their answers. Appropriate mathematical vocabulary was used throughout. The teacher then issued packs of cards, illustrating different systems of forces, to small working groups. The apparently simple task of matching equations to different parts of the systems was, in fact, very challenging. The discussion amongst groups of students demonstrated clear understanding of previous work, ability to apply learning in a new context and to work collaboratively. In the plenary session following this activity, students confidently explained and justified their answers to the rest of the class. A variety of other activities ensued and the brisk, active pace of the lesson was maintained right to the end.

148. Students who have studied the higher level mathematics course at GCSE and achieve a grade C have the opportunity to study A level mathematics and further mathematics. The highest attaining students are effectively challenged by their studies in further mathematics and are offered enrichment opportunities by the provision of master classes within the college and video conferences with other schools and colleges. There is currently no provision of suitable advanced courses for students with good (B or C) GCSE grades gained through the intermediate GCSE mathematics course. This is unsatisfactory.

149. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Records of students work are well maintained and examination results are carefully analysed. Some teachers mark students' work in detail with constructive comments. Others mark work less thoroughly. The mathematics department development plan and work schemes are detailed and well organised. The department has established a web site to support both teachers and students. This offers students good opportunities for independent learning, at any time, in addition to those offered by homework and coursework. Overall the improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Number skills across the curriculum

150. Students use mathematics and numeracy skills effectively in the study of other subjects in the sixth form. For example in geography they use complex statistics; in physics students construct and interpret linear and parabolic graphs and use trigonometry to resolve forces and to solve vector equations; in health and social care students analyse trends over time and display data using appropriate graphs.

SCIENCE

Biology, chemistry and physics were inspected in detail. Electronics teaching was sampled. Teaching in electronics is excellent. Great care is taken in lesson planning. Students are deeply engaged by the hands on approach and the standards they reach are very high.

Example of outstanding practice

In an exceptionally well prepared Year 13 electronics lesson about logic gates the teacher began by feeding back to the group on their project work to date. The teacher's very good understanding of the work of individuals and his own excellent subject knowledge created strong interplay between teacher and students as they were asked to explain the work they had done. They were very capable of doing this and the high level discussion enabled them to focus on improvements. There was a strong emphasis on individual work on circuits with very precise targets for the use of students' time. The teacher provided very strong support as he drew out ideas from students. The lesson was further enhanced by the supportive presence of a visiting governor who is an electronics engineer. Achievement was very high and all students were able to talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about their projects.

Biology

Provision in Biology is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good staff subject expertise supports good standards.
- Student attitudes are very good and this contributes to their achievement.
- Good co-operation between the two departments in the consortium provides good support for students from both schools.
- Opportunities for students' independent learning are limited.

Commentary

151. A level results in biology are around the national average with a broad spread of results reflecting the very high uptake of the subject. In 2003 AS level results were below average. Students make satisfactory progress in building on their generally high GCSE achievement. Standards observed in lessons and in the scrutiny of students' work indicate generally good achievement with more able students achieving high standards. Year 13 students showed their ability to investigate both biological and chemical data in a theoretical investigation of pollution and a Year 12 group displayed good practical skills in a chromatography investigation. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

152. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers make good use of their strong subject expertise. Most lessons are well planned so that students are interested in the course and have the motivation to work hard. Where students are provided with appropriate challenges their learning is enhanced and is good. Student attitudes to the course are very positive. Although the student coursework is generally of high quality, there are too few other opportunities for students to learn independently. Learning is satisfactory overall.

153. The A level and AS biology courses are delivered by a team from S Peter's and a neighbouring school using the appropriate accommodation, resources and technical support available on each site. The head of biology at St Peters provides clear leadership for the team across both schools. Management and administration of the course are therefore essentially co-operative but work well thanks to the professionalism of all the staff concerned. Regular meetings also ensure continuity within the courses.

154. Since the previous inspection student numbers have remained high and external examination results have been similar to the national average. Therefore, overall progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching encourages students to make good progress in lessons.
- Students' very good attitudes assist their learning.
- Some good use of ICT supports teaching and learning.
- Good co-operation between the two departments provides good support for students from both schools.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to use and improve their skills as independent learners.

Commentary

155. A level results in physics are similar to the national average with a broad spread of results reflecting the comparatively high uptake of the subject. Students make broadly satisfactory progress in building on the very good GCSE grades that many achieved.

156. Standards observed in lessons and in the scrutiny of students' work indicate generally good achievement with higher attaining students achieving high standards. Students have good practical skills. Year 13 students showed by their responses and questions a good grasp of electromagnetic induction, whilst another group understood many of the difficult ideas involved in the classification of fundamental particles. A Year 12 group displayed good practical skills in an investigation of terminal velocity.

157. Teachers make good use of their subject expertise to enthuse and encourage students to do their best. Teachers plan their lessons well so that students are interested in the course and have the motivation to work hard. Teaching is good overall. Students are provided with appropriate challenges which, together with their very positive attitudes to the course, make for good learning. Information and communication technology is well used but teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to work independently.

158. The A level and AS physics courses are delivered by two teachers from each school in the consortium using the appropriate accommodation, resources and technical support available on each site. Student numbers in physics are large with several groups in each year. Management and administration of the course are essentially co-operative but work well thanks to the professionalism

of all the staff concerned. Regular meetings between the physics staff ensure continuity within the courses. Since the previous inspection student numbers have remained high and external examination results have been similar to the national average. Therefore, overall progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

- Teaching is good and leads to good learning.
- Co-operation and consultation between teachers over the monitoring of students' progress needs to be extended and developed.
- Students are committed and have a good attitude to their studies.
- The sharing of good practice needs to be extended.
- Students are supported by a good source material but the use and application of ICT needs to be extended.

Commentary

159. Results in the 2003 examination at AS showed an improvement over 2002 in both the overall pass rate and the percentage of A to C grades. In the advanced level examination the overall pass rate also increased but the percentage of higher grades fell. Students in both Year 12 and 13 currently show a good ability to understand and apply the theoretical aspects of the subject. Students in Year 12 have a very good grasp of organic chemistry and were able to draw structures with some confidence and to follow the intricacies of chemical nomenclature. Students also showed a high level of practical skill and are obviously at home in the laboratory. The work files of the students are well organised and frequently checked by teachers. There were however relatively few examples of the use of information and communication technology in their work both for presentation and research. Achievement is satisfactory overall.

160. Teaching is good overall and results in good learning. Lessons are very well prepared and all the teachers are well-qualified with very good subject knowledge. The quality of students' oral and written work is good but their skills in independent learning are below average. The development of a 'learning platform' on the school's website will provide very good resource material in the future and could serve as a base to further the skills of independent research and learning for the students. Relationships in the classroom are very good and the students have, justifiably, full confidence in their teachers: this confidence and trust enables the students to participate well in class discussions. Students showed very good understanding of some of the theoretical sections of the course in one very good lesson on spectrum analysis: they were challenged to make analytical decisions at a brisk pace, using graphical information with accuracy and confidence, and their learning was very good. In a good lesson on organic mechanisms students, led by the teacher, demonstrated good oral skills in discussion and evaluation of the details of organic synthesis.

161. Leadership in the department is good and there is a shared commitment towards helping students to achieve success. Classes are shared between teachers from S Peter's and a neighbouring school and this makes co-ordination difficult. Management of the shared sixth form classes is not fully effective because one teacher does not take responsibility for the coordination and monitoring of the students' progress. The shared nature of the teaching would also benefit from both structured and informal mutual observation in order that all teachers gain from the best practice.

162. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of ICT and use this well to promote good learning and achievement.
- Planning and organization are very good and provide a strong basis for teaching and learning.
- There are good resources and accommodation that improve learning opportunities.
- There is insufficient use of ICT by all sixth form students to develop their own work.

Commentary

163. Standards for Year 13 students, as shown by A level results, have been close to the national average over the last three years, but in 2003 they were below average. Indications are that standards now are average in both Year 12 and 13. A reason for fluctuations in results is the significant number of students who start the course with a limited background in ICT.

164. Although many students have limited background in the subject, the standards attained in lessons are average. This is the result of very good teaching, the good relationships and interest that students show in their work. As a consequence their learning is good. Students in Year 12 demonstrate a good grasp of local area networks, wireless networks and input and output devices. In Year 13 students are able to determine the criteria for choosing new software and understand the testing process involved. The challenging teaching and positive attitudes seen in these classes are resulting in good achievement. Female students are doing slightly better than male students.

165. Teaching is mostly very good and lessons are well structured. At the start of lessons teachers ask good questions that are designed to make students think about previous work and provide a good basis for the current lesson. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of ICT and use this to teach topics in a way that will interest the students and support their learning. There is good access to resources and the accommodation is good, though this is barely adequate when lessons take place in ordinary classrooms.

166. Students learn well. Good use is made of available resources including digital projectors. Photocopied sheets provide information that supports concepts in the lesson and these also include questions that test students' understanding. Students sometimes show a reluctance to ask and respond to questions even though they are supported well by their teachers.

167. The good teaching and learning result from ICT being very well led and managed. Staff are well qualified and there are enough of them to meet the needs of post-16 ICT. The staff work well together and have a commitment to improving standards. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

168. ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory regarding access and use within subjects but the use of ICT by students to develop their own work is a weakness. The use of ICT is best in mathematics and science but requires further development in a number of subjects, particularly art, German and music.

HUMANITIES

History was inspected in detail. Lessons in geography were sampled. Provision in geography is very good. Standards in advanced level examinations are high as a result of very good teaching. Achievement is high and stems from the very good grasp teachers have of the courses they teach.

Assessment is effective and informs the students of their current progress and future targets for examination success. The department is efficiently managed and benefits from very experienced and committed teachers.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Good standards were achieved in the most recent A level examinations and current students are on course to do well.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements enables them to prepare students thoroughly for examinations.
- Teaching ranges from very good to competent but unexciting.

Commentary

169. Standards are broadly in line with the national average. Students' achievement is satisfactory and in line with what might be expected based on their GCSE grades. Some students are achieving high standards. A level results in 2003 were good overall with the proportion of students in the small entry achieving high grades above the national average. AS results for 2003 in Year 12 were less good; overall students did not do as well as their earlier achievement suggested they should. In current lessons students of widely differing ability are making appropriate progress. Their factual knowledge is sound and they are steadily developing their skills for advanced work in terms of research, analysis, weighing evidence and extended writing. The achievement of the current Year 12 is good because students are clearly engaged by the work they are doing and maintaining a strong work-rate. They are building effectively on their earlier experience and some are reaching very high standards.

170. The sample of teaching seen was very limited because normal teaching routines were largely suspended to enable students to prepare for imminent coursework or examinations. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Individual support for students preparing for personal studies is good. Students in Year 13 discuss with clarity and insight the work they are preparing. Discussions with students and examination of their folders indicate that teaching in Year 12 is challenging with students encountering a range of active approaches to learning which motivates them and enables them to sustain a high work rate. These approaches are enabling the most able students to learn effectively, think deeply and produce mature written work. They benefit from regular feedback about how to improve their work. Some of the teaching, while generally competent and based on good subject knowledge and sound relationships with students, offers limited stimulus and excitement. Appropriate resources are used but lessons do not take flight and students are too passive. In these lessons the voice of the teacher is too dominant and the dynamic of the small group does not encourage active student participation. In these cases the learning is adequate.

171. The new head of history is hard-working, enthusiastic and enterprising and making an impact on syllabus choice and approaches to teaching and learning. Leadership and management are good. The analysis of the 2003 results is thoughtful and clear and the actions arising from it relevant and likely to improve AS results. Progress has been made in redesigning schemes of work and there is a clear and relevant plan for the future. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory but some of the shortcomings of teaching reported then are still evident.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was the AS and A level design and technology courses of product design, textiles and food technology.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are broadly average but students achieve well considering their skills, knowledge and understanding at the start of Year 12.
- Teaching is good: teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and of the requirements of the examination syllabuses.
- The subjects are very well led and the close co-operation between teachers uses expertise effectively.
- There is a great deal of data now available but it is not yet being used intelligently to identify the next stage of students' learning.

Commentary

172. Standards in the design and technology subjects are broadly average. However, this does not tell the full story: some of the work is of outstanding quality and much, though average or below, represents good progress and achievement. A good example of the outstanding work was the coursework of one student who designed, researched and manufactured a chair. The work was both creative and challenging and the solution showed ingenuity. In developing the idea and the process of manufacture the student used the school's very strong links with industry and gained considerable expertise in finding industrial solutions to problems. There is also high quality work in textiles and food which shows similar attention to detail. Here, students make good progress and develop their knowledge and understanding effectively. Outcomes are often innovative and well presented. Overall, while there is room to improve standards in the sixth form, students' achievement is better than expected: this is reflected in the analysis of examination data.

173. Teaching is good. A particularly strong feature is teachers' knowledge of their subject. They have a secure understanding of what it takes to gain a good pass in advanced examinations and use this effectively to structure their teaching. Teaching methods encourage students to work independently and provide tasks that are challenging but pragmatic. As a result students make good progress and develop their learning skills well. Good relationships and high expectations lead to similarly high levels of interest from most students. A weakness is that assessment does not always feed into plans for future lessons. This can sometimes be difficult when each student is developing an individual idea but students are not always clear of what they need to do to improve.

174. Leadership and management are very good. There is a strong commitment to improvement and to providing the best for students. The strong links with business, industry and other schools contribute effectively to students' learning, providing opportunities to experience a wide range of processes and techniques. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design and music were inspected in detail. Teaching in theatre studies was sampled. Recruitment and retention rates in theatre studies are good and students are enrolled from neighbouring schools. Recent examination results at AS and A level have been below average but current standards across both years in the sampled lessons are above average and students' levels of achievement are good. They understand the form and structure of dramatic performance and can use improvised and scripted techniques. They co-operate and support each other well during the preparation for performances, using very good analytical skills and evaluating their own and each other's work rigorously. The teaching they receive is good and the subject is well led and managed.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are well informed and familiar with examination specifications; teaching is good.
- Teachers provide good advice and support for individual students.
- Students enjoy the subject and work well to develop their ideas and concepts; their achievement is satisfactory.
- They work within a narrow model of the curriculum that places undue emphasis on the acquisition of traditional skills.
- There are limited opportunities for students to produce images using information and communication technology.

Commentary

175. In the GCE A level examination in 2002, attainment by all students was well above the national average, with girls' attainment being well above that of boys in the school. In 2003 however, there was a significant decline in standards and no students achieved the highest grades. Attainment was well below the national average.

176. The majority of students in Year 12 work well to develop those skills that they acquired in Year 11. They are carrying out research into subject matter contained in the GCE AS level examination questions. They make good use of their visual diaries as a means of collecting visual material that can be converted into highly personal pieces of work. The majority are producing work of a standard that is just above average.

177. Year 13 students are engaged in completing studies for their final GCE A-level examination. They settle very readily to develop their concepts and ideas, mainly through drawing and painting. There is evidence in the visual diaries that many have acquired skills that enable them to work independently. A small minority are making creative use of photographic images as initial starting points for final pieces of work. Standards are average with a significant minority working above. Achievement is satisfactory throughout the sixth form.

178. Teaching is good. Teachers are well informed and possess good understanding of the GCE examination requirements. They employ teaching methods that are appropriate to the nature of the tasks and students benefit from advice and support teachers offer to individuals. Informal assessment during lessons is good. It is informative and designed to help students improve the quality of their work. However, written records are lacking in detail which impacts on the accuracy of targets that are set for students over the longer term.

179. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a very clear vision as to how she would like to see the department develop. She is a good role model for both staff and students. However, formal assessing, recording and tracking systems lack rigour at present and do not provide students with detailed feedback as to how they can improve the standard of their work.

180. Studio space is very good but the two very large multi-purpose studios are in need of refurbishment. Students in the sixth form operate at some disadvantage as consortium arrangements mean they are taught in two different schools. This leads to a lack of continuity in their work, as they cannot easily transport large paintings between these two centres. Resources are good, but there are limited opportunities for students to produce images through the use of computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards of attainment remain variable and documentation for assessing, tracking and recording still requires improvement.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good; teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Standards are above average and students' achievement is very good.
- Students are well motivated; they show commitment to the course, and are involved in many music activities.
- The computer programs used by students are not compatible between the different schools in the consortium.

Commentary

181. Results were above average at A and AS level in 2003, with male and female students attaining similarly. Standards of work by the current Year 12 and 13 students are above average. Achievement for all students is very good, reflecting the consistently very good teaching. The high standards reported at the previous inspection have been maintained. Students use musical language competently, and support each other in musical dialogue and performance. They have good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of music, demonstrating high quality musicianship when playing and discussing their music. They are able to direct ensembles, paying particular attention to the music's expressive qualities, and developing different interpretations.

182. Students learn very well because of very good teaching. Teachers show very good knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. Relationships are excellent. Students are inspired to produce sophisticated compositions. Performing standards are often very high and they are given opportunities to perform in a wide variety of venues. Teachers encourage and challenge all students because they are sensitive to individuals' needs. They demand that they think for themselves and are able to appraise and evaluate their work. Planning is very thorough, and there is very good co-operation between all staff to ensure a consistent and systematic approach. There is more computer equipment than at the time of the previous inspection; however, the programs are not compatible in both schools. As a result students are unable to work on their compositions and transfer information easily between sites.

183. Leadership and management are very good. Students' progress and their attendance are carefully monitored. There is a shared approach to target setting, and a consistent approach to assessment, ensuring students understand their strengths and weaknesses. However, at present, teachers in the two schools which provide music teaching do not have facilities to communicate electronically with each other. There is careful monitoring to ensure a consistent approach between staff across the department. This ensures that best practice in teaching is shared, and students learn in a high quality musical environment.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical Education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current Year 13 students are achieving very well.
- Leadership and management of the department is very good with a clear vision, high aspirations for student performance and very well planned programmes of study.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, especially when lessons are stimulating and students' understanding is consistently checked.

- Year 12 students are taught in one large group which does not provide sufficient opportunity for individual participation in lessons.
- Whilst facilities for practical work are very good, there is no dedicated classroom for the teaching of theory lessons.

Commentary

184. Standards achieved in this subject are good overall with the current Year 13 students, almost two thirds of whom gained an A or B grade in their AS level examinations, achieving very well. Several students are performing at a very high level of personal skills in their chosen sport and are able to demonstrate quite sophisticated skills in analysis and evaluation. 87per cent of students completing the full A level in 2003 passed, a fifth with the top grades, a little below the national average. Current Year 12 students, who are taught in a relatively large and often impractical sized group, cover the full range of ability but answer well in class when challenged with the higher attaining students using and defining basic sports study terminology well.

185. Teaching is good overall with all teachers demonstrating very good subject knowledge and delivering very well prepared lessons authoritatively. Targeted questions are used effectively to stimulate learning but some lessons, for instance in the large Year 12 group, are not sufficiently student-centred to stimulate students and as a means of checking understanding. However, students are assisted with their learning through the provision of relevant and stimulating materials, past papers and course information. Student work is thoroughly marked although feedback to students does not always contain sufficient information on what they need to do to improve. The department is beginning to provide a more consistent and coherent approach to monitoring student progress.

186. The enthusiastic and very well organised head of department sets high standards in terms of student performance and has a clear vision and high aspirations for the department. Working with the neighbouring school's head of department, he effectively manages and deploys an experienced team of subject experts across the two centres. Well structured programmes of study ensure the sports studies A Level is taught effectively and students appreciate the guidance and support given as part of these programmes. He also provides a good role model for highly effective teaching and learning: for example, with the organisation and presentation of a very good lesson as part of students' 'analysis of performance' module. In this Year 13 lesson, very well motivated and capable students worked hard under the expert guidance of the teacher in perfecting their evaluation skills. One student in particular, when evaluating a videoed swimmer's technique, demonstrated a level of skills which was quite outstanding in its depth and clarity of analysis.

187. The importance of physical activity for sixth form students is emphasised with non-examination students being provided with timetabled activities and a range of extra-curricular activities, which provide many additional opportunities for sixth form students to develop their sporting, as well as their leadership and organisational skills. The latter is enhanced through the very successful Community Sports Leader Award.

188. Facilities for the subject are very good but for examination students the use of a range of unsuitable classrooms for the teaching of theory lessons does not create a positive and relevant learning environment for them. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

BUSINESS

Business was inspected in detail. Economics teaching was sampled. In the economics lessons observed teaching and learning were good in a Year 13 lesson on income distribution and satisfactory in a Year 12 lesson on the housing market. In the former lesson the very well prepared teacher used targeted questions to challenge students' understanding. With the very good student-teacher relations this created a pleasant and productive environment in which students made good progress. In the Year 12 lesson the teacher was also very well prepared with a range of stimulating

materials but there was insufficient challenge and questioning of students to ensure that they really understood the key factors which affect the supply and demand for houses.

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students on the current vocational courses are achieving well.
- The department provides an impressive range of business courses in the sixth form to cater for students of all abilities.
- Teaching and learning, especially on the vocational courses, is good with well motivated students working productively in and out of lessons.
- Evaluation of the department's strengths, weaknesses and performance is very good.
- Industry links and business initiatives are very good and provide students with an insight into the world of business.
- Accommodation has not kept pace with the expansion of the subject and some lessons are conducted in inappropriate classrooms.

Commentary

189. The department achieved a commendable 100% pass rate for both the business A level and the Intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in 2003, although the number of students achieving the highest grades was below the national average. This represents good achievement however. Students with special educational needs are well served in the department and achieve as well as their peers. Students are well motivated and teacher-student relations are good.

190. The inspection was conducted whilst two of the three full-time members of staff were absent through illness and it is testament to the management skills of the head of department that the teaching arrangements were handled efficiently and supply staff were deployed effectively.

191. Portfolio work on the vocational courses is assessed very competently with staff having a very good understanding of the qualification's assessment requirements. Courses are very well planned and the topic guides provide excellent support for students in preparing and producing their work. Students appreciate the access to staff, are provided with appropriate target grades and on the vocational courses are provided with information on how to achieve them or on where work is missing.

192. Analysis of students' work, discussion with students and observation of students with the head of department and the supply teachers indicate that teaching and learning are good with teachers displaying good subject knowledge and setting appropriate work for students. Students are able to use and apply a range of business concepts covering the major business areas including marketing, finance, business objectives, ethics and human resources. There is however just one dedicated business room, with only seven computers, the department having expanded considerably. Lessons are often being held in classrooms which do not generate an appropriate learning environment.

193. Leadership and management of the department is good with very clear and continuing evaluation of departmental performance. However, the department's development plan, whilst in line with the school's key developmental areas, is not sufficiently rigorous and does not contain enough measurable targets for improving performance. There are very well developed industry links and business initiatives which are used to reinforce students' understanding of key business topics. The recent trip to London was very much appreciated by students and the comprehensive range of

institutions visited provided a real insight into the workings of business institutions. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

194. Lessons in health and social care were sampled but the subject was not inspected in detail. In the lessons observed for the advanced course, teaching was good with well informed and knowledgeable teachers able to communicate the key aspects of the subject in a stimulating and enthusiastic manner. In a very good Year 12 lesson on early years education students exhibited a high degree of independent learning. The teacher's support and guidance catered for the needs of all students so that all made very good progress in the lesson. Examination results are good in terms of high pass rates and achievement is good.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

195. There is a very good range of timetabled personal development programmes in the sixth form which enable students to make choices, work collaboratively, develop specific skills, serve the community and take on new challenges. These include key skills, physical education, community service, theatre studies, first aid, critical thinking, Young Enterprise, Proshare, Community Sports Leadership Award and Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Students are appreciative of this unusually wide range of activity which makes a significant contribution to their personal and social development.

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

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