

INSPECTION REPORT

DEYES HIGH SCHOOL

Liverpool, Merseyside

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104948

Headteacher: Peter Reed

Lead inspector: Val Lynch

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th March 2004

Inspection number: 264056

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,444
School address:	Deyes Lane Maghull Liverpool Merseyside
Postcode:	L31 6DE
Telephone number:	0151 526 3814
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors	Dr David Allen
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Deyes High School is one of three secondary schools providing education for students aged 11-18 in the towns of Maghull and Lydiate. There are 1,444 students in the school and of these 282 are in the sixth form. The school is very popular with parents who appreciate the traditional values that the school promotes. When students join the school they have reached standards that are above average. A small proportion of students have special educational needs. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Employment in the area is high. Many parents appreciate the value of education and ensure that their children can participate in the opportunities offered by the school. There are very few students from ethnic minority groups and none are at the early stage of learning English. The school has a very small minority of students who are in the care of the local authority. A small number of students play significant roles as carers within their families. Most students who wish to follow academic courses post-16 remain at the school to study in the sixth form. The school plays an active role in the Sefton Excellence in Cities programme and in collaborative work with other schools supported by the National College for School Leadership. The school has a *Sportsmark* Award and is recognised as an *Investor in People* organisation.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English
23082	Graham Loach	Team inspector	Mathematics – sixth form
31159	Clive Simmonds	Team inspector	Science Biology
8501	Paul Hartwright	Team inspector	Design and technology
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8070	Joe Haves	Team inspector	History
11695	Anthony Edwards	Team inspector	Information and communication technology – sixth form
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music Performing arts – sixth form
32225	Christine Hough	Team inspector	Business education Physical education – sixth form
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education
34266	Glenys Hart	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
15606	Christine Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs
10807	Paul Quest	Team inspector	Sociology
33650	Sarah Megeney	Team inspector	Mathematics
4046	Deirdre Smith	Team inspector	History – sixth form

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Deyes High school is a good school with many significant strengths. Test and examination results are consistently above average. Achievement is good in all years. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are good. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school promotes values that are appreciated by both students and parents and underpin everything that happens in the school.
- Students achieve well because their behaviour is very good; they are keen and eager to learn and therefore benefit from the good teaching.
- Although target setting and the monitoring of students' progress are relatively new, they are already rigorous and enable staff to identify potential underachievement.
- Students with special educational needs make very good progress because recent innovations in the curriculum meet their needs very well.
- There is insufficient evaluation of students' learning and achievement during lesson observations.
- Teachers miss some opportunities to develop independent learning skills, especially of the most able students.

Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Results have remained above average despite a slight drop in 2003. New procedures have been introduced to monitor the work of departments and to track students' progress. All other issues from the previous inspection have been addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 and 13 results

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

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 students attained at the end of Year 9

Overall standards achieved are good. By the end of Year 9 test results are above average but in 2003 they were not as good as in similar schools. Mathematics results were high and better than results in English and science. Standards of work seen during the inspection were also above average. Students do particularly well in physical education. They do not do as well as they could in music. The way students are grouped and taught in Years 7 to 9 is now helping them all to achieve better than they have in the past and achievement is now good. As the table shows, GCSE results were above average last year but were not as good as those in similar schools. In Years 10 and 11 standards of work in lessons are above average and achievement is now good. Over the last two years the school has developed ways of tracking students' progress which help students to reach the standards of which they are capable. In the sixth form examination results and standards of work seen are above average and achievement is now good. Boys did better than girls in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 but girls did better than boys in both GCSE and A-level examinations. In lessons there is no difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are very good. Students' personal development is good but teachers miss some opportunities to give students real responsibility for

aspects of school life and for their learning. Students show respect and have very good relationships with their teachers and with each other. There are very good opportunities for spiritual development in religious education, creative subjects and assemblies. Students are well aware of right and wrong. They are not as aware as they could be of the rich variety of different cultures in this country. Students like their school and are keen to learn and to participate in all the activities it offers. Behaviour in lessons and around school is very good, even in some quite congested areas. Attendance is good and students are generally punctual to school and always punctual to lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good and students learn well. There is a very positive atmosphere for learning in most classrooms because teachers and students relate well to each other. However, students are not given sufficient opportunities for independent learning, particularly in the sixth form. Assessment of students' work is good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. It provides students with good advice on how to improve. Teaching of students with special educational needs is very good and these students make very good progress in Years 7 to 9. The school is very innovative about the curriculum it provides. There is very good provision for students with learning or behavioural difficulties in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 much thought is given to meeting the needs of less academic students. Students are well cared for and supported through their time at the school. The new arrangements for setting targets and monitoring students' progress are helping all students to achieve their potential. The school has very good relationships with parents and with local colleges. It has good links with local schools and with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership. He energetically articulates a clear vision for the school and inspires the confidence of both the school and the local community. Leadership is good throughout the school and is successfully focused on achieving high standards of work and behaviour. School management is good so that the school runs very smoothly. Governors know the school well and fulfil their roles correctly and competently.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is always over-subscribed and parents and students are proud of the school. Parents and students recognise that the students learn well because the teaching is good. They all praise the support that staff provide for individual students. Students and parents think this is a good school that is well run. They are very supportive of the school's expectations of the highest standards of dress, courtesy and respect.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- focus departmental self-reviews and observations of classroom practice on achievement and learning to make sure that all students are doing as well as they should;
- provide more opportunities for independent learning that challenge the most able students;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that the way citizenship is taught and assessed meets National Curriculum requirements.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is effective and provides a good range of academic courses. Examination results are above average and achievement is now good. The school is one of the highest attaining schools in the borough. Teaching is good and students work hard. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. The sixth form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Examination results are above average but too few students gained the highest grades in 2003.
- Students have trust and confidence in their teachers because they know they have very good subject knowledge and very good knowledge of examination requirements.
- Students are very confident and mature young adults who are committed to their work and to their school.
- Monthly checks of students' progress ensure that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do next.
- There are not enough opportunities within the taught curriculum for students to broaden their interests and understanding and to develop their interpersonal skills.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Students are attaining above average standards and their levels of achievement are good. Teaching is stimulating and challenging and the subject is well led and managed. Overall provision is good.
Mathematics	Attainment is above average at A and AS level. Students make good progress because teachers have strong subject knowledge and have very good working relationships with students. The head of department provides very good leadership and manages the department well.
Science	Standards are above average in Biology. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding help students make good progress. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Chemistry and physics were sampled. One lesson was seen in each. Teaching was very good in both and standards seen were above average.
Information and communication technology	Standards are satisfactory. The teaching is good so students achieve well. The department is well led and managed.
Humanities	In religious education, psychology and history, examination results were below average but current standards are better than this. In religious education teaching is very good; teachers have high expectations and the course is becoming even more popular. In history teaching is very good and leads to very good progress. Teachers are developing the subject well. Examination results and work seen in geography and sociology are above average. Teaching and learning are very good in sociology and good in geography. The three subjects inspected in depth, religious education, history and sociology, are very well led and managed.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Design and technology was sampled. Standards and achievement are satisfactory. Teacher plan lessons well and make good use of ICT to help students learn.
Visual and performing arts	Standards in performing arts are above average and achievement is very good.

Consistently very good teaching inspires high quality performances and student research. Leadership and management are very good.

Health and social care, leisure and travel. In physical education standards are average. Teaching is good so students make good progress. Leadership is very good and management are good.

Business Standards are above average. Achievement is good because teaching and learning are very good. The department is very well led and managed.

General education Although results in A-level general studies were above average in 2003, standards of work in the current Years 12 and 13 are well below average. The way the course is organised and taught is unsatisfactory.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive very good advice and support. Teachers and tutors use assessment data well so that students feel confident about the support provided for them. The personal, social and health education programme in the sixth form provides many opportunities for students to find out about and prepare themselves for higher education. Sixth formers are fully involved in the life of the school and willingly and confidently take on responsibilities. There are occasions when students could be given more responsibility, for example in fully leading and managing the school council. Sixth formers are excellent role models for younger students; they present themselves well and are pleasant, mature young people.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. Leadership is committed and there are clear lines of responsibility so that life runs smoothly in the sixth form. There is, however, a lack of strategic thinking about some aspects of the curriculum in the sixth form about which the school has choice. The school does not currently plan or provide sufficient opportunities to broaden students' curriculum experiences. Performance is analysed carefully and the school takes the correct action to bring about improvement in subject or individual performance.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are all pleased that they chose to study in the sixth form at Deyes High. They talk enthusiastically about their work, recognising that teachers guide them well in their studies. They have no major concerns and demonstrate high levels of pride in their school. They respect and value the head of sixth form, recognising his approachability and concern for the needs of individuals.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

In all years achievement is **good** and standards of work seen are **above average**. In the sixth form standards are **above average** and achievement is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test and examination results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above average but not as good as in similar schools.
- Achievement is now good in all subjects across Years 7 to 11.
- Although examination results are above national averages, the A and AS level results in biology and chemistry are not good enough.
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well.
- In Years 7 to 9 there has been a significant improvement in boys' performance since the last inspection.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.7 (34.7)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	38.3 (37.8)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	35.1 (36.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 230 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2003. However, with the exception of mathematics, they were not as good as results in similar schools. Mathematics results have improved from those of the previous year but science results have declined, as a result of which the overall improvement is at a slower rate than that seen nationally. The performance of boys has markedly improved since the last inspection. Boys attain higher levels than girls in mathematics and science, although girls gain the higher standards in English.
2. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are good in all subjects except music where standards are satisfactory. When compared with their prior attainment, students achieve very well in physical education and well in all subjects other than music where achievement remains satisfactory. Setting is having a positive impact on the achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 and achievement is better than last year's test results would indicate.

Key Stage 4

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	63 (66)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	91(91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	38.0 (40.6)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 232 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ

3. GCSE results are above average and have been consistently so since the last inspection. They are below those attained in similar schools but reflect satisfactory achievement when compared with the students' prior attainment at the end of Year 9. Results in 2003 were slightly below the school's target due to underachievement by a minority of boys. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are good in all subjects except for business studies where they are satisfactory. In history and physical education achievement is very good. In all other subjects achievement is good. The school set up an effective system for monitoring students' progress three years ago and this is bearing fruit in the current Year 11. In the trial examinations nearly all students were on target to achieve their predicted grades.
4. Boys and girls reach similar standards by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement by boys as girls do much better than boys nationally. Students with special educational needs do very well. They make good progress in lessons, in small groups and in individual sessions. Students who are recognised as gifted or talented are set appropriate levels of challenge and attain high standards in most subjects.
5. Students' standards in literacy are good and support their learning in other subjects; they understand a range of difficult texts and are confident and articulate when talking about their learning. Numeracy skills are well developed. Students apply these skills across other subject areas. They are able to collect data, display and interpret their findings. Students' ICT skills are good and are used to support learning across the curriculum.

Sixth form

6. Examination results at A-level have remained above average since the last inspection. Results in 2003 were below those of the previous year and there was a significant reduction in the proportion of higher grades A and B obtained. Achievement was satisfactory overall, although there were marked differences across the different subject areas. The analysis of examination results indicates significant underachievement in biology and chemistry last year. Consistently high standards have been recorded in mathematics, physical education and business studies. In 2003 high standards of examination performance were also recorded in computer studies. Girls did better than boys in 2003 at both A2 and AS levels. Standards of work seen in lessons indicate considerable improvements in the sciences and good achievement in English, mathematics, biology, history, religious education, sociology, business and physical education. Overall achievement of the current group of students is good. Standards of work seen in general studies are below expectations.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' personal development is **good**. Attendance and punctuality are **good**. Students' attitudes to school and their learning are **very good**. Behaviour is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance figures are above average and students are generally punctual in their arrival at school and always punctual to lessons.
- Students like their school and are keen to learn and to participate in all the activities it offers.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is very good, even in some quite congested areas.
- Students' personal development is good but teachers miss some opportunities to give students real responsibility for aspects of school life and for their learning.

Commentary

Attendance

7. Students attend school regularly; they miss few lessons and therefore maximise their opportunities to be successful in tests and examinations. Punctuality is good, although in the morning a minority of students are a little late, some arriving in their parents' cars.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.5	School data:	0.1
National data:	7.6	National data:	1.2

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

8. Students are very enthusiastic about their school and talk very positively about how their teachers help them. In lessons they settle quickly to work. When given responsibility or asked to do independent work they respond well. They are well organised and always have the necessary equipment with them.
9. Behaviour in lessons is very good. On the rare occasions that teaching is unsatisfactory students still generally behave well. At breaks and lunchtimes behaviour is very good despite the overcrowding in corridors around the dining area. Arriving and leaving school are very orderly. Although students spoke of some bullying they also said that if it does occur the school resolves the situation quickly and well.

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	1,466	10	0

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

10. The number of fixed period exclusions is very low and there have been no permanent exclusions in recent years. One of the reasons for this is the very good provision, funded by the Excellence in Cities initiative in Sefton, for younger students who experience difficulties with their behaviour.
11. Students show respect and have very good relationships with their teachers and with each other. They work well in pairs, in groups and in general discussion. There are very good opportunities for the spiritual development of students in religious education and particularly in other creative subjects. They show respect for and an understanding of the beliefs of others. Students are well aware of right and wrong and have a very clear understanding of what is expected of them. Their care and sensitivity is reflected in the way they behave and in the concern they show for others in the local and wider community. Students are confident and are developing well as responsible citizens. Students are aware of their own cultural heritage but the school recognises that more could be done to help students appreciate the rich variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this multi-cultural Britain. There is guidance for teachers on how the school can promote personal development. It is the focus of a much of what the school does. However, there is no planned or co-ordinated approach across subjects. Consequently teachers miss some opportunities for students to be more involved in learning for themselves.

Sixth form

- Attendance and punctuality are good, although some sixth formers are amongst the minority who are late for school. Sixth form students are mature young adults who are keen and willing to be involved in their school. They respond well to opportunities to work with younger students, and fulfil their prefect responsibilities with efficiency, sensitivity and dignity. They manage and supervise a number of activities in school and participate in a variety of community service. There are occasions when teachers' desire to help prevents students from tackling things they are capable of doing. A good example of this is the school council that could be chaired, minuted and managed by older students, rather than staff doing it for them. Students have highly developed social skills and personal qualities and they demonstrate these in discussions, debates and everyday conversations. Sixth formers are excellent role models for younger students.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form is **good** and students learn well. The assessment of students' work is **good** in Years 7 to 11 and **very good** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good working relationships between teachers and students promote effective teaching and learning.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They anticipate questions and offer alternative strategies for solving problems.
- Strong assessment with constructive feedback ensures that students get good advice on improving their performance.
- The teaching of students with special educational needs is very good so they make very good progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Alternative strategies to meet the needs of the most able students have not yet been sufficiently developed.
- Students are not given sufficient opportunities for independent learning, particularly in the sixth form.

Commentary

- In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good and very good in history and physical education. Students respond positively to this good teaching so that effective learning takes place. The school's commitment to the implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy for students in these year groups is having a very positive impact so there are no subject areas in which teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are at least good in all subjects in Years 10 and 11. There is very good teaching in history, art and physical education and no subjects in which teaching is unsatisfactory. A key feature of the good teaching across all year groups is the subject expertise of the teachers, as a result of which students are confident that any subject difficulties they have can be resolved by talking with their teachers.
- Working relationships between teachers and students are very good and create a positive classroom atmosphere in which effective learning takes place. Teachers know their students well. They continually encourage and praise them so that they have the confidence to answer questions and contribute to group discussions. In the best lessons, for example in an outstanding history lesson seen, students are challenged by directed questioning that recognises their different ability levels. They experience a wide range of learning activities and are given opportunities to explore and extend their understanding by sharing experiences with each other.

16. In less successful lessons teaching does not make full provision for the wide range of ability within the class. The same tasks are set for all students and do not present sufficient challenge to extend the knowledge and skills of the most able. Occasionally, learning is restricted because teachers talk at the students too much and do not give them sufficient opportunity to become involved in the lessons.
17. Teaching and learning are very good in classes consisting mainly of students with special educational needs. Outstanding practice was observed in Year 7 lessons for a group of students identified as requiring considerable support at the start of their secondary school career. Teachers of this group are very aware of the needs of each student and plan their lessons accordingly. A wide range of learning styles and experiences ensure that lessons engage students throughout. Support staff make a considerable contribution to students' learning and work closely with teachers before and during lessons.
18. Procedures for assessing students' progress and attainment are at least good across all year groups. There are clear guidelines issued to departments in the form of a well-structured assessment policy and there is good tracking of students' assessments as they progress through the school. Target setting has been established and is used to good effect with all students. The quality of marking of students' work is good and, in many areas, very good. In the best instances students receive good, constructive, subject-specific advice that enables them to improve their performance in future.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 160 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
10 (7)	42 (26)	68 (42)	34 (21)	6 (4)	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.

Sixth form

19. Teaching is good. It is good or very good in all subjects except general studies where there is a lack of specialist teachers and teaching is unsatisfactory. The school has recognised that A-level examination performance in 2003 did not meet the very high standards that it sets itself. There is, however, clear evidence from the lessons observed that the school's teaching and learning policy is now taking effect. Most students are making good progress and achieve well. In the excellent lessons observed in history and performing arts students were highly motivated by the level of challenge, the teacher's enthusiasm and the pace of the lesson. Very good working relationships between teachers and students lead to a strong, supportive work ethos that facilitates good learning.
20. The demands of syllabus completion and a perception that learning has to be teacher-directed does result in opportunities for students to engage in individual or group activities being missed. Such activities would greatly enhance their understanding. In all subjects marking is thorough and in most it is diagnostic so that students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

The curriculum

The curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, is **good**. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**. There is a **very good** match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students aged 14 to 19 benefit from good alternative provision in Years 10 and 11 and a very broad range of sixth form courses.
- Innovative thinking characterises curriculum development and planning.

- The curriculum for students with special educational needs is very good.
- A wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities are well supported by students.
- Provision in citizenship does not meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

Commentary

21. The school offers a broad range of courses for students in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, providing a variety of pathways for 14 to 19 year olds. These include good vocational and practical opportunities, combined with academic routes for high attaining students. Students can choose an enrichment course, which includes GNVQs, a range of academic and vocational GCSEs and opportunities to study practical subjects, leading to NVQs, at Southport College. Students find that the advice they receive as they choose which route to follow is useful and timely. Provision for personal, social and health education is good.
22. Staff are innovative in their thinking about the curriculum, aiming to provide appropriately for all students. The school has acted as a focus for development, co-operating successfully with other institutions for the benefit of students. A project with Southport College involved two other secondary schools in a successful bid to broaden provision still further. Planning for this type of development is continuous. The school is working to provide a course for the most vulnerable students in Years 10 and 11 that covers life skills and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. The school recognises that not all students can cope with a college-based course and is looking to provide the new course using its own staff who know students well. In Years 7 to 9, the school has improved its systems for grouping students, successfully providing a more finely tuned curriculum to meet the needs of all students.
23. All students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. All statutory requirements are met and reviews are up to date. Staff give careful consideration to the requirements of individual students to enable them to achieve as well as they can. The curriculum is well organised to meet their needs and the school makes adjustments, where necessary.
24. The school provides a very good range of interesting, relevant enrichment activities, especially in music, dance, drama, and sport, which involve large numbers of students. Many of these contribute significantly to their personal development, general fitness and ability to work together in a variety of groups. Other cultural events, subject clubs and homework support sessions have a positive effect on learning. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is well established in the school and well supported by students.
25. The curriculum for citizenship in Years 7 to 11 does not meet statutory requirements, having too little time and inadequate monitoring. Not enough work has been done to ensure that the way citizenship is taught meets statutory requirements. Very little work has been done to ensure that the school can assess citizenship as is required for Year 9 in the summer of 2004. All other statutory requirements in the main school are met.
26. All departments have a full complement of suitably qualified teachers and benefit from very good support by technical and administrative staff. Almost all departments benefit from very good support by teaching assistants. There have been good improvements to some of the accommodation recently. However, some areas are still unsatisfactory. English has no central area for staff, needs redecorating and has poor storage facilities. Learning is hindered in performing arts due to teachers having to share rooms and on occasions use a nearby church hall. In music, small rooms and inadequate soundproofing restrict the curriculum. In art one of the rooms is too small for the size of classes. In physical education the gym floor is in need of replacement and students have to travel about a mile if they need to play games on a full size pitch. The learning resource centre is too small for the number of students in the school but the provision for sixth formers to do private study in the centre is good. There are problems with access for the disabled. Some steps are too high and doorstops prevent the easy movement of wheelchairs. Resources have improved since the last inspection. Although the learning

resource centre has a below average number of books per student, it has very good ICT facilities.

Sixth form

27. High numbers in the sixth form enable the school to offer a very broad range of subjects and types of certification. The school's innovative approach has led it to offer certain courses through distance learning, bringing them into the taught curriculum when they are justified by attracting viable student numbers. The personal, social, health and citizenship course includes some useful topics. It does, however, lack any rationale, or indeed aims and objectives, and emphasises knowledge at the expense of understanding and skill. The general studies course is unsatisfactory at present and it includes religious education, a statutory requirement for sixth form students. Currently this statutory requirement is not being met although, when the general studies course is running well, these requirements are met. The school offers students a good range of opportunities to work with younger students and to work in the community.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures that the care for and welfare of the students are **very good**, as are the arrangements for ensuring health and safety. It provides **good** arrangements for supporting and guiding them in the life and work of the school. Students' views are valued and used well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school ensures everyone in the school community is safe and secure, as it has very good arrangements for health, safety and welfare.
- The school is very good at meeting the needs of individual students.
- Very good guidance ensures that students choose the correct courses in Year 10.
- Good use of systematic assessment helps students know what progress they make and how they can improve.
- Some staff do not always capitalise on students' willingness to be involved in the life and work of the school.

Commentary

28. The school has very good and effective procedures for the protection of students in terms of health and safety. Risk assessment procedures are firmly embedded in practice. Child protection procedures are secure. The school works in partnership with other agencies to ensure students are getting the support required. Pastoral teams work collaboratively to identify any issues at an early stage and involve parents from the beginning.
29. The school is very good at meeting the needs of individual students and in particular those with special educational needs. 'The Station' and the mentors are both very good developments of the school's support for students with special needs. They contribute considerably to their learning, improving behaviour and reducing exclusions. The positive approaches used particularly in 'The Station' and by the mentors are very effective in getting students back to school and learning well. A very good range of support and guidance is used, especially at the time of transitional reviews. The high quality relationships between staff and students have a positive effect throughout the school.

Example of outstanding practice

The Station is a base where students who exhibit early signs of experiencing difficulties spend a fixed period of time. They work with adults whose aim is to return them to learning with their peers.

All change at 'The Station'. That is exactly what happens to students with learning, social and behavioural needs who are chosen to spend time in 'The Station'. It is a fixed, timed halt while they are supported back onto the mainline learning track. They get the very best support and guidance to help them be successful. All the people who work with them, teachers, mentors and other professionals from outside school, have each child's needs at the heart of everything they do. Parents and carers speak

very highly of the progress reports and of the relief they feel that good things are happening for the children. They enjoy the opportunities to give support, including the home reading scheme. The most marked improvements they note are in the students' confidence and self-esteem. As a result of very good teaching and support, all students learn very well. Learning is designed to boost success and to promote social links with other students, staff, visitors and people in the community. Mentors play a key role in supporting and guiding students, listening to concerns especially at the time of examinations. Many of these students achieve standards they never thought they could and nearly all turn their shortcomings and concerns into successes. The crucial factors in the success of all this support are the excellent record keeping and bespoke target setting. Careful monitoring of each student's progress makes sure that any changes in attitude, standards of work and achievements are quickly taken on board. New targets are set with the child to build up the pace of the journey. The work of staff in The Station is effective in raising standards. Back on track, leaving The Station, students know they will continue to be monitored. If they start to run out of steam they know who will work with them to keep them on the mainline to success. Above all they appreciate very much the stop at 'The Station' and their newfound confidence for the learning journey.

30. The school provides its students with good information and impartial guidance that lead them towards informed choices regarding their future studies or careers. This is particularly true for students in Year 9 choosing options for Years 10 and 11. This wide-ranging advice and guidance includes the innovative use of a theatre group who acted out the theme of choosing the right pathway. This had a cross-curricular theme, linking with personal, social and health education. It concerned making the correct choices and the consequences of actions.
31. Students have access to well-informed support, advice and guidance as they progress through the school. Good systematic use of assessment and target setting are used well to advise students of how they can improve. Students are very aware of the level at which they are working, their target level and in the majority of cases what they need to do in order to improve. The majority of tutors support students well during tutor time, using it effectively to monitor the use of planners routinely. However, a few do not. There is no systematic checking and monitoring of the use of this time at the start of the school day.
32. Students are eager to be involved in the school's work and development. They participate in school and year councils as well as the running of "The Den", for example. However, the school does not sufficiently capitalise on the students' willingness to be involved. Their views are not taken into account during departmental self-reviews. They also miss out on taking real responsibility for organising the school council and school functions.

Sixth form

33. Students receive very good advice and support. Teachers and tutors use assessment data well so that students feel confident about the support provided for them. The personal, social and health education programme in the sixth form provides many opportunities for students to find out and prepare themselves for higher education. Sixth formers are fully involved in the life of the school. They exercise some leadership of the school council and willingly take on other responsibilities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **very good** partnership with parents and with local colleges. It has **good** links with local schools and with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works hard to include parents in their child's education by providing very regular and detailed information.
- Staff ensure that the parents of students experiencing difficulty with their learning or life in school are fully involved.
- The school has good links with other schools to the benefit of students and staff.

- Very good links with local colleges extend the curriculum choices available to students and promotes their confidence and self-esteem.

Commentary

34. Teachers commit significant time and energy to inform parents about the progress their child makes. They provide termly updates of performance in all subjects. Several consultation meetings are offered during the year and parents are invited to meet teachers in all the relevant subjects. In addition, the school ensures that all parents discuss with the form tutor, on at least an annual basis, their child's overall progress and targets for improvement. Parents value the increasing range of information evenings such as the recently held and exceptionally well attended session explaining study techniques and learning styles.
35. Staff, including learning mentors, maintain very regular contact with parents of students experiencing difficulty in school or those who have special educational needs. The school arranges very effective support from a wide range of agencies and ensures that parents are partners in this collaboration. Parents are therefore very confident that the school meets their child's individual needs. The school in turn appreciates the support parents give, especially at the time of the annual reviews. The school welcomes and involves parents fully when their children join the school. Staff deal with any parental concerns very promptly and sensitively and the school regularly seeks parents' views. This very good partnership secures and justifies parents' confidence in the school.
36. The headteacher is very active and effective in the recently formed association of local schools. The rapidly emerging links enable staff to share and extend their expertise with other schools. The school willingly shares its facilities with other schools, including local primaries. Regular dialogue with these schools ensures that the transfer of information about students is timely and efficient. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 is much enhanced because of very good links with Southport College. Students relish the wide range of vocational courses available to them. Pastoral staff from the school make sure that students attend the college regularly and thrive on the variety of activities arranged.
37. In addition to these valuable links, the school benefits from the good support of an increasing range of local organisations and individuals. Many students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme which fosters significant community involvement. Sporting links are strong because local clubs use the facilities regularly. Regular outside visits contribute well to students' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**. Other key staff are **good** leaders. The governance and management of the school are **good**. The leadership of the sixth form is **satisfactory** and its management is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The commitment and energy of the headteacher inspire students and staff to aim high and do their best.
- School leaders successfully promote a very inclusive school where everyone matters.
- Senior leadership is good but inconsistent in its approach to the support provided and the challenge offered to departments.
- Monitoring and evaluation are not sufficiently focused on learning or whole school priorities.
- The governing body is well organised and promotes a clear vision for the school.
- Very good financial planning and management ensure that the school uses its budget and additional grants very effectively.

Commentary

38. The headteacher provides very good leadership. He has a very visible presence around the school and is very approachable for parents, students and staff. He is skilfully bringing about improvements in a measured way by consulting and involving others. He has introduced a good department review process, which feeds into the annual improvement plan. In addition, he has introduced an innovative culture, which is enthusing many others. Rigorous target setting for students is now in its third year. The process includes termly reviews of students' progress and is beginning to ensure that students reach the standards of which they are capable. The headteacher has introduced the school consultative group, which includes all school leaders and meets regularly. Shared leadership is therefore strong and ensures that all staff contribute to and feel part of future developments.
39. The management of the school is good overall. The senior leadership team is keen and their strengths complement one another. Middle managers are influential and most demonstrate good or very good leadership. Leaders at all levels in the school are committed to ensuring that the needs of individual students are quickly identified and properly addressed. Students feel valued, respected and very proud of their school as a result. The established and well-led pastoral aspect of the school is central to this work. Leaders are keen to improve and are supportive of school initiatives.
40. The senior leadership team share the headteacher's vision and aspirations. Roles and responsibilities are carefully defined. Procedures for analysing data and evaluating school performance are generally good but inconsistent. The headteacher holds all departments to account for their students' performance in external exams. Many departments do this well, but not all. Senior leaders offer varying degrees of support and challenge to departmental leaders. They are all supportive, but the challenge is not always sufficiently robust to ensure that students' achievement is maximised. The effectiveness of middle managers is improving, but rigorous self-evaluation is not sufficiently developed in all departments. The quality of learning, in particular, and the effectiveness of the curriculum are not sufficiently monitored and reviewed. Consequently, a few department and pastoral managers do not match the consistency of their practice to the best. The use of individual education plans, for instance, is not sufficiently monitored in all departments. Satisfactory leadership and management of the special educational needs department have led to satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, especially in terms of the provision for students up to the end of Year 9.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,382,918	Balance from previous year	91,637
Total expenditure	4,162,983	Balance carried forward to the next	219,935
Expenditure per student	2,909		

41. The management of the school finances is very good. Governors understand the importance of obtaining best value. Priorities are clear and focused on raising achievement and standards. A small, but prudent, carry forward is predicted for next year in order to continue improvements in accommodation. The school makes very good use of the additional monies available through two individual grants, *Excellence in Cities* and the *Leadership Incentive Grant*. The former funds many of the arrangements which the school has so successfully introduced to support those students who are poorly behaved or have difficulty with their school life. The school, including the sixth form, gives good value for money.
42. The governance of the school has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Governors are well informed, forceful and well led. They share the headteacher's vision and

aspirations for the school. They play a key role in the production of the annual improvement plan. They ensure that the school fulfils all statutory responsibilities except those for citizenship education. Governors have a good understanding of many aspects of the school, recognising the strengths and weaknesses. However, the review of teaching and learning in the school is not as well developed as other aspects of their work. This inhibits the governing body's ability to challenge current practice that focuses on teaching rather than learning.

43. The school's status as an Investor in People organisation is long established. There is a well-recognised commitment to the professional development of all staff. Systems for the induction and performance management of staff are good. Teaching and support staff benefit from a good range of training opportunities. Of particular note is the very good contribution that the school makes to the initial training of new teachers. The leadership of this work, by an advanced skills teacher, is outstanding. The school trains many students each year and this ensures dynamic partnerships with a good range of training institutions. Teachers benefit from the regular and mutual exchange of ideas and skills.

Sixth form

44. Good management of the sixth form ensures that it runs very effectively. Students are very supportive of the sixth form and still identify closely with Deyes High School. Staff and students respect and value the head of sixth form, recognising his approachability and concern for the needs of individuals. Performance of individuals and of departments is carefully analysed in order to target improvement. Leadership of the sixth form is equally concerned about and committed to the school's vision. The school has developed an academic curriculum with a very good range of subjects that meets the needs of its students. However, there is insufficient strategic thinking about the whole curriculum offered to sixth form students.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average because of the consistently good teaching.
- Students achieve well because of their positive attitudes to the subject and their good behaviour.
- The quality of teaching and learning is not rigorously monitored on a regular basis.
- Teachers' marking shows no consistency in informing students how to improve their work.

Commentary

45. The proportion of students obtaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2003 GCSE English language examinations was above average for boys and girls. Attainment at the highest A* and A grades was significantly above what boys and girls were obtaining nationally. Achievement overall was good but that of the most competent students and those with special educational needs was very good. The standards attained were better than at the time of the previous inspection. Results in the English literature examinations were also above average but fewer students attained the highest grades. Achievement in the subject was good.
46. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were above average but below those in similar schools. Boys did better than the girls compared with their national counterparts and their performance and levels of achievement over time have been consistently good. Girls' results, although still above average, have declined in relation to girls nationally. Their achievement has been satisfactory.
47. The standard of writing seen during the inspection was above average in Years 9 and 11 for boys and girls. Achievement in this skill is good for all students, including those with special educational needs. The creative writing of the most competent students is of a particularly high standard. All students write fluently and accurately in a range of styles and their extended writing is well organised. They make good use of computers for drafting and presenting their work in various forms. The analytical writing of the older students is very good because their critical skills are highly developed. Reading skills are well above expected levels and are developed further by the increasingly difficult texts they meet as they move up the school. The issues they reflect on in their reading contribute significantly to their moral and social awareness. Standards of speaking and listening are very high and are key factors explaining students' good achievement. Students share ideas and are supportive of each other when talking about their work in groups. The climate for learning in lessons is very good because students listen for extended periods and show respect for the contributions of others. Their achievement in developing their reading, speaking and listening skills is very good.
48. Students achieve well because of the consistently good teaching. They come to lessons prepared to learn, are attentive for extended periods of time and work productively. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good and as a result they learn well. Students recognise and value their teachers' careful planning and their use of varied teaching strategies to interest and motivate them. Very good working relationships underpin the learning process. One area of inconsistency is in teachers' marking, where written guidance is not always given to students on how to improve their work. In the lessons observed students did not challenge and question their teachers and were reluctant to engage enthusiastically in whole-class discussions.

49. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is a strong sense of purpose and direction in the work of the department. A commitment to raise standards and to foster the personal development of students pervades the work of all teachers. This has resulted, for example, in a significant improvement in the standard of boys' work. Systems are in place to monitor the work of students and teachers but there is a lack of rigour in implementing those systems and taking any necessary follow-up action. Senior teachers are aware of the need for tighter monitoring so measures have been taken to strengthen the management team. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. Students throughout the school have good language and literacy skills. They adapt their writing well 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. The provision for students with special educational needs is particularly strong and they make very good progress in developing reading and writing skills. Oral skills are well developed. Students explain themselves clearly at length. They can develop and amplify the points they make and engage effectively in group discussions. Students also learn well because they are able to listen for extended periods of time and because they show respect for the contributions of other students. The literacy co-ordinator has promoted the sharing of good practice across departments and has clear priorities for future developments. She works closely with her colleagues to monitor provision and to ensure there is a consistent application of the school's literacy policy.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and there are some examples of very good teaching.
- Teachers do not always exploit opportunities for using ICT fully.
- Standards have improved recently in Years 7 to 9 .
- Students of all ages benefit from clear, new assessment systems.

Commentary

51. French GCSE results were close to average in 2003 overall, but girls' results were below average. In 2003, results in teacher assessments in Year 9 were well above average and this continued a rising trend since 2001. Standards seen in lessons were average overall amongst older students and above average in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is good overall in all age groups but in some classes in Years 10 and 11 students are not working to capacity. In most classes, students work as well as they can, are keen to learn and proud of their achievements. They respond well to the assessment systems the department has introduced over the last two years to keep track of their progress. Students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted or talented also achieve well.
52. Teaching and learning are good in all age groups, with some examples of very good teaching in Years 7 to 9. The good and very good teaching is characterised by extensive use of French by the teacher and a range of different activities, including group, whole class and individual tasks. Students appreciate the helpful way teachers respond to their written work, providing guidance as well as encouragement and useful feedback on attainment. All students use ICT regularly to support their learning, but lack of planning by the teacher means that sometimes these opportunities are not properly exploited. The quality of teaching is not consistent, because in some lessons the teacher does not use enough French to communicate with students, whose learning is therefore less secure. Students are now more aware of their attainment levels, but rarely have the opportunity to develop the skills of independent learning.

53. The subject is well led and managed by the head of modern foreign languages. A clear statement of vision appears in the departmental handbook, together with a range of practical policies including the use of French in lessons and the principles underpinning teachers' response to students' written work. Since her appointment two years ago, the head of department has developed and put into practice new systems for assessing and following students' progress. These enable the department to analyse and improve its performance. There is a good sense of teamwork within the department, but the quality of teaching and adherence to policy is not consistent among all staff. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, standards have risen and teaching is now good overall.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most lessons are conducted in German, even for beginners.
- Students work hard and relate very well to their teachers.
- Standards have improved and the number of students choosing the subject has risen.
- Students receive good feedback on their progress through improved tracking and analysis of performance data.
- Students do not develop independent learning skills or fully exploit ICT to support their learning.

Commentary

54. German GCSE results were average in 2003 overall, with girls' results above average and boys' just below. At the end of Year 9, results were well below average, reflecting the small amount of time allocated in Years 8 and 9. Standards of work seen in lessons were above average in Years 10 and 11 and average in Years 8 and 9, indicating an improving trend amongst the younger students. Achievement is currently good in Years 8 and 9 with students working hard, making swift progress and laying an adequate foundation for further progress in Years 10 and 11. All students benefit from the useful feedback provided by teachers using the department's thorough assessment systems.
55. Teaching and learning are good in all age groups. Teachers use German most of the time in lessons and usually move students through their work at a rapid pace. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and work is of a good standard, providing good levels of challenge. Teachers adjust the level of difficulty so that students at all levels, including those with high attainment as well as the ones with identified learning needs, make good progress. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to enable students to develop independent learning skills and students tend not to use language in new ways or venture outside the immediate context of the lesson. Students use ICT in German on a regular, timetabled rota, but do not make full use of it to support their learning, neglecting, for example, the grammar and spelling checks which could help them learn.
56. The subject is well led and managed by the head of modern foreign languages. Improvement since the previous inspection in German is good. The number of candidates taking German GCSE is much higher than before, teaching is now good and standards at the end of Year 11 are above the national average.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average and at the end of Year 11 students gain more A*-C grades than seen nationally.

- Assessment is used well to inform teaching and to advise students on how they can develop, although not all teachers give students constructive written feedback.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students are very supportive of the learning environment, particularly for those students with special educational needs.
- Questioning is carefully targeted so that all students participate in the lesson.
- There are limited opportunities for students to take enough responsibility for their own learning.
- The range of learning materials provided in a number of classes does not fully meet the needs of all students.

Commentary

57. There has been consistent improvement in results gained both in GCSE examinations and in the end of Year 9 national tests since the previous inspection. At GCSE in 2003, a greater proportion of students attained A*-C grades than students did nationally. The department has identified that the proportion of students attaining A* grades is below that nationally and has taken action to improve the situation for the current Year 11 students. In 2003, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average and better than similar schools. Students are performing very well at the higher levels. The standard of work seen was high in Years 7 to 11, with students in the top set in Year 9 working successfully on higher level materials. There is good learning in lessons with clear evidence of students succeeding at levels higher than expected for their ability. Achievement is good in all years.
58. Teaching is good and in a couple of lessons it is very good or excellent. Where teaching is good or better, it captures the imagination of the students with carefully chosen activities that ensure the participation of all students. These activities generate a great deal of enthusiasm for mathematics. Nevertheless, there are too few activities that require students to take responsibility for their own learning. There is good practice of this within the department but it is not shared and developed. Where good activities of this type have been observed, students relish the opportunity to explore mathematics and make very good progress. For example, in a Year 10 class, an open-ended activity was used very well to encourage paired discussion, which fed back into a whole class debate. This promoted independent learning with students eager to contribute. Questioning is used to great effect within all lessons to provide appropriately challenging work and to assess students' level of understanding. The information gained in this way is used to inform planning and teaching. Careful targeting enables students of all abilities to participate in lessons. Students are very aware of the level at which they are working, their target levels and what they can do to achieve their targets. The verbal feedback students receive from teachers is of a very high standard. However, written feedback, although very positive, is variable and often provides limited guidance on how students can improve. Frequently the range of learning materials provided in a number of classes does not always fully meet the needs of all students.
59. Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally good and in a number of cases very good. Students respond well in lessons, especially where interactive activities and resources are used such as mini-whiteboards and competitions. Teachers have high expectations of students. The very good relationships between teachers and students enhance and support learning, particularly for those students with special educational needs. In these groups there is a very good atmosphere for learning, so students' confidence is built up, enabling them to meet the challenges set.
60. Leadership and management of the department are good and team members are very supportive of each other. Newly qualified teachers feel well supported, not only by the head of department but also by other teachers. There is a determination to improve results, in particular the percentage of students gaining A* grades at GCSE. Key areas for improvement have been identified through the school's annual review. The department has responded by drawing up a development plan with agreed actions and timescales. The department works well with teacher training establishments. Through supporting and developing trainee teachers, the department has in turn further enhanced existing skills, for example questioning techniques. Improvements in standards achieved in lessons, students' attainment and the use of mathematical vocabulary

and the introduction of an annual departmental review to monitor the quality of teaching and learning indicate the department has made good progress since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. There is a school policy on the use of numeracy that is monitored well by members of the mathematics department. Students' numeracy skills are such that they can cope with all demands made of them in other subjects. In science, they construct graphs and interpret them well. Students can also construct and balance relatively complex chemical equations. In ICT in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11, students create accurate formulae in Excel to perform calculations.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan very well to suit the needs of most students, but there is no planned provision for gifted and talented students.
- There are good strategies to improve literacy.
- Assessment of students' achievement is good.
- Students are good at practical work.
- There is insufficient evaluation of coursework results.

Commentary

62. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average in 2003. They declined slightly from 2002. They were, however, well below those of students in similar schools. Boys gained slightly higher results than girls but neither boys nor girls did as well as they should have done. Changes have been made to the way students are grouped in order to tackle this underachievement. Many aspects of the National Key Stage 3 strategy have been introduced to ensure that students of all abilities achieve well. Students show increasingly good literacy skills that support their understanding of science. In a Year 7 class of students with special educational needs they used scientific language well to write about their experiments with acids and metals. The achievement of students with special talents in science is good. This is because of their positive attitude and motivation.

63. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations in both double and single award science were well below average. These results are below average because a third of the students, the most able scientists, entered for the three separate sciences instead of a double award. In biology and chemistry results were well above average; they were average in physics. These results reflect good achievement in biology and chemistry but results in physics were not as good as they should have been. Not enough students gained the higher grades in biology, physics or chemistry. Overall there was little difference in the results of boys and girls. Standards remain above average in the current Year 11 and achievement is good. Practical skills have improved considerably. Students make accurate observations in experiments. They collate, tabulate and analyse results effectively. Higher attaining students identify anomalies and can explain them. Students of all abilities find evaluation difficult and this adversely affects their GCSE coursework. The presentation of their coursework has been enhanced as a result of the literacy strategy contributing to more effective writing.

64. Teaching is good with some very good features. The most effective teaching is characterised by thorough assessment of students' progress and careful planning of lessons. Very good assessment tells students how to improve. They receive well-focused feedback on their work that helps them to understand and make good progress. Teachers check students' understanding in class by asking probing questions. This encourages students to develop their thinking skills by considering their answers carefully. The sharing of innovative ideas and good practice strengthens planning. This increases the range of teaching strategies and helps to

raise standards. However, there is insufficient structured extension work to raise their achievement further and insufficient opportunities for more independent learning.

65. The raising of standards is the focus of a well led and well managed department. The head of department has welded together an effective team of teachers, so there is a shared understanding of the factors that contribute to high standards. Leadership places a high priority on helping teachers to develop their skills and share their good practice. All teachers have been trained to support the National Science Strategy and this, together with the National Literacy Strategy, is helping to raise achievement in practical work. Laboratories are satisfactory for teaching, but the preparation area is too small to service all the laboratories effectively. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Some laboratories have been refurbished. The use of ICT has improved, but there is insufficient data logging equipment. There has been a very large investment in texts, particularly in revision books. These allow students to support their schoolwork effectively with home study.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and students make good progress.
- Marking and assessment of work are good and motivate students to work hard.
- Teaching is good and is the main reason that standards are very good.
- Standards of ICT when students join the school are not rigorously assessed.
- Leadership and management have maintained high standards and developed provision.

Commentary

66. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. GCSE results were also well above average. This is good achievement. Students join the school with average ICT skills but the range of their skills is not rigorously assessed to inform teaching in Year 7. Students acquire a good range of skills, including the use of spreadsheets, databases, multimedia presentations and the production of web pages in Year 9. The most advanced students are beginning to explore web code. In Year 10 students carry out advanced searches on the Internet and Year 11 students produce detailed user guides for their projects.
67. Teaching and learning are good and supported by very good relationships between staff and students. This is a strength of the school. Lessons are well planned and there is a consistency of approach across the department. Teachers have high expectations, especially about the use of technical language and good specialist knowledge. Lessons have a brisk pace and learning objectives are shared with the students. The assessment of work and tracking of progress are good. Students are given clear criteria and know what to do to improve their standards. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. All students are well motivated to learn and show high levels of concentration. They work confidently with a wide range of software.
68. The department is very well led and management is very good. Staff are trained to improve their teaching skills. Formal monitoring and departmental reviews have taken place. The resources in terms of hardware, software, technical support and learning materials are very good and support learning. The ICT co-ordinator for Years 7 to 9 has begun to implement changes in response to the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Computers are available at break and lunchtime and there is intensive use of them by students. Teaching was a strength at the previous inspection. It continues to be so. Access to computers both in the learning resources centre and in the ICT area was an issue. This situation has greatly improved. The school has continued developing the use of ICT across the curriculum.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. There has been a significant improvement in the resources around the school since the previous inspection. Students have very good access to computers. The maintenance of resources around the school is good. This enables students to utilise their ICT skills in art, English, mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages, music and design and technology. There is good use of data-loggers in science as well as control and computer-aided design in design and technology. The learning resources centre provides access to electronic magazines and multimedia.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject.
- Very good management ensures that staff are effectively supported.
- Assessment procedures provide accurate information on students' progress.
- The curriculum provides good learning opportunities for all students.

Commentary

70. This is a successful department that achieves and maintains high standards in Years 7 to 11. In 2003 students in Year 9 achieved standards that were well above average. In the same year, GCSE results for students in Year 11 were well above average and high in relation to the same students' overall performance across other subjects.
71. Standards remain well above average in both Years 9 and 11. Achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9 where standards rise significantly above attainment on entry. These high standards are maintained in Years 10 and 11 where achievement is good. This success is because of very good teaching and learning throughout the school. Both boys and girls achieve well and higher attaining students produce work of very good quality. Students with special educational needs also achieve well because of the well-targeted support they receive.
72. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to present information clearly and support this by drawing upon a wide range of evidence. In a very good lesson in Year 9, students considered sources that identified German opposition to Hitler and were asked to consider why it failed. This lesson promoted reflection and spontaneous discussion well, while engaging all students in enquiry. In Year 11, students study a range of 17th century crimes and decide on an appropriate punishment. This provides very good opportunities for discussion of changing attitudes to offenders over time. Very occasionally, there is insufficient dialogue in lessons and students' learning is then too passive .
73. The leadership of the department is good. There is a clear commitment to maintaining high standards and a positive ethos that promotes close teamwork. Management is very good, with clearly defined, practical procedures for the accurate recording of students' progress and careful management of resources. Very good assessment procedures ensure the accurate recording of students' achievement, with support provided whenever a student experiences difficulties. This also contributes to maintaining high standards. A wide range of educational visits, including a trip to Ypres, enriches the curriculum. Students enjoy the subject, evident from their conscientious work over time and their good attitudes and behaviour in lessons. Increasing numbers choose history as an option to pursue in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum promotes skills in literacy and numeracy effectively. The use of ICT is steadily improving. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Geography

Overall provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and reach above average standards.
- Although teaching is good, some teachers do not provide challenging work for the more able.
- Very good assessment procedures help teachers to check students' progress.
- Very good leadership and management are leading to rising standards.
- The numbers of students opting to study geography in Years 10 and 11 has shown a substantial rise, but few girls choose the subject.

Commentary

74. Standards are above average at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. However, there were too few entries for GCSE in 2003 for comparisons to be made against national statistics. Assessments indicate that students enter the school with below average attainment in geography. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 11 and standards are rising. There are shortcomings in the quality of teaching in some lessons that affect achievement for the most able students and they do not always achieve as well as they could. Girls and boys achieve equally well.
75. Teaching and learning are good overall. Where teaching is at its best, teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure that students are challenged and are encouraged to think and investigate rather than simply learn basic geographical facts. Students behave very well in lessons and show very good attitudes to work. Assessment procedures are very good and provide consistent data for tracking students' progress and for setting individual and subject targets. Where teaching is unsatisfactory and in some lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, teachers do not provide work that is challenging enough for the most able students. Sometimes the teachers tell students too much and this restricts students' opportunities to investigate and work out answers for themselves. In other lessons teachers do not pay enough attention to National Curriculum levels and the work is too easy for talented students.
76. The department is very well led and managed. Schemes of work have been extensively revised and contribute to rising standards. Review procedures are thorough and extensive. A hard working and committed team of teachers is making a substantial contribution to rising standards and to the increasing popularity of the subject. Geography makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the enhancement of literacy and numeracy skills. The use of ICT is good. There is a substantial increase in numbers studying geography in Years 10 and 11. This is a strong indication of the growing success of the subject. However, few of the students opting for GCSE are girls. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in all years.
- Teaching is good and contributes well to students' achievement.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that students receive a very rich curriculum.
- The assessment of students' work is well developed.

Commentary

77. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average in relation to the Sefton Agreed Syllabus. Given students' average standards on entry to the school, these standards represent good achievement. There are many good examples of students developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. They link their knowledge of religion effectively with their everyday experiences. Students with special educational needs achieve well. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work enable students to improve their speaking and listening skills.
78. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. All students in the year were entered for the examination but only half gained A* to C grades. In the work seen, students' achievement is good. Students extend their knowledge and understanding of how they can learn from religion and apply it in their lives by exploring their own attitudes and making informed judgements. They make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of religious concepts. However, they do not always question or explore their own attitudes in sufficient depth because of the limited amount of curriculum time available.
79. Teachers' good use of discussion and questioning enables students to express their opinions and to form clear judgments about religious and moral issues. Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject enables students to make good progress in the GCSE course. In one Year 10 lesson, where students showed a very clear understanding of the principles of a just war, their ability to articulate their views was very well developed. Homework is used very well to allow students to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have high expectations of students and challenge them to succeed. Good assessment procedures provide a clear basis for assessing what students know and understand. The detailed comments in students' books enable them to be clear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. Students' spiritual and moral awareness is particularly strong. They demonstrate a clear respect for other people's views, faiths and traditions.
80. Leadership is very good, with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. She has been very successful in developing a strong team approach and is very well supported by other teachers, several of whom are specialists. Management is very good. The department is very well organised and this makes a clear contribution to students' achievement. Since the last inspection standards and the quality of teaching have improved. Procedures for assessment and tracking progress have improved greatly.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The provision for design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 10 and 11 do better in some aspects of technology than they do in others.
- Teaching is good overall and is sometimes excellent.
- Assessment processes provides excellent information for students, teachers and parents.
- Leadership and management are effective.
- Teachers make good use of resources, particularly ICT.

Commentary

81. GCSE results in 2003 and the two previous years were close to average overall but they were not as good as results in other subjects. However, results in graphic products were well above average and those for electronics and textiles were above average. A significant number of A and A* grades were obtained in 2003. Girls' results were higher than those achieved by boys but the difference is similar to that found nationally. Results in resistant materials and food

technology are below average. Students have very varied technological skills on entry to the school. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average. The standard of work varies considerably in Years 10 and 11 with the best work being achieved in graphics, electronics and textiles. Achievement during Years 7 to 9 is generally good. However, achievement during Years 10 and 11 varies considerably. It is good in graphic products, electronics and textiles and is satisfactory in resistant materials and food technology.

82. Teaching is generally good and sometimes excellent. Learning is similar in quality, although in one lesson learning was affected by the uncooperative behaviour of some students and poor relationships with the teacher. Most teachers have good knowledge of their subject and use their understanding well to prepare interesting lessons. In a few lessons pace was lacking and learning suffered from a lack of variation in teaching style. Expectation and challenge in classes with a high proportion of more able students are often very good. Teachers give additional help to these students so that the higher GCSE grades are obtained. Students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills through the research and analysis sections of their coursework, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Information and communication technology is well used in most subject areas. Cultural differences are well addressed in both textiles and food technology. Students have good access to design equipment so that graphics skills are taught well in all years. Those with special needs are given extra help from classroom assistants but they do not have the benefit of learning from their more able peers because of the setting system. Some classes are taught by more than one teacher which makes continuity more difficult to achieve.
83. Assessment procedures are very good. Teachers record individual National Curriculum levels for each student in Years 7 to 9. These are assembled to produce a very flexible, comprehensive assessment system by which the progress of individual students and whole classes can be determined. The process is similar and equally effective for GCSE classes but includes the use of GCSE grades and enables judgements to be made about how well students and classes are doing.
84. Leadership of the department is good, providing clarity of vision and an innovative curriculum. Comprehensive schemes of work ensure the requirements of the National Curriculum are met, although metals are underused. Good student workbooks and information leaflets have been produced. Whilst these are well suited to the more able students, those with special educational needs find them difficult to comprehend. The senior management team is supportive. Managers make frequent visits to technology lessons to increase their knowledge of the subjects and to monitor performance. The department has useful links with city schools which give students additional design and manufacturing experience.
85. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching staff have sufficient experience to teach in several of the technology subject areas, so providing considerable flexibility. Accommodation in the resistant materials area is now very good. Other rooms are satisfactory but the fact that they are separate from the main block makes co-ordination difficult. The department now has good access to a variety of resources including information and communication technology (ICT) hardware and software. The very good CAD/CAM facilities make this feature a strength of the department.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

The provision for art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Very good leadership and management are raising standards and increasing the numbers of students choosing art and design for examinations.

- Teachers have high expectations and challenge students to do their best.
- Good assessment and marking helps students know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- The monitoring of teaching does not focus sufficiently on students' learning.

Commentary

86. Standards are average for students in Year 9 and show good achievement from below average standards when they entered the school. Design ideas are imaginative. Models show they understand and can use ideas of exaggeration and expression in three-dimensional form. Sketchbooks are used well to collect images but there are not enough of the students' own ideas in them. In recent GCSE examinations results were average. However, standards in Year 11 are above average and students have made good progress from when they were in Year 9. Design work is well researched and reflects an awareness of a range of artists. Drawing skills are good but there could be more first hand observational drawing. The way they use a wide range of materials shows an increase in technical confidence. Students with special educational needs do as well as others and those deemed talented in art achieve well.
87. Teaching is good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to provide a stimulating curriculum. A rich range of materials is used to broaden students' thinking and to show them what they could achieve. In an excellent Year 11 lesson the teacher used stimulating resources that fascinated the students. They could not wait to have a go with materials and techniques they have not tried before. This made a big improvement on their work in progress. Teachers have very good class discipline. Individual advice and support, sensitively given, help students gain confidence to develop their work. Teachers use assessment well and students have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. In a few lessons students do not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and teaching does not make enough use of questioning to check understanding.
88. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision for the department based on its strengths and areas for further development. The success of the department is evident in improved standards and an increase in the number of students taking art at GCSE and continuing into the sixth form. Visits to galleries, as far away as New York, and working with visiting artists give students very good opportunities to enrich their experiences. In one room teaching and learning are limited by the accommodation and the use of the room as a thoroughfare to two other classrooms. The present system for assessing students entering the school does not give reliable information about what they can do in art and design or for predicting what they should be able to do in Years 9 and 11. Monitoring of the department is effective but focuses too much on the teaching and not enough on the learning. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, especially in the numbers of students taking the subject at examination level and in the achievements at the highest grades.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained by students in Year 11 are consistently above the national average and their achievement is good.
- Teaching is good for students in Years 10 and 11, enabling them to develop an extensive range of musical skills.
- Some lessons in Years 7 to 9 do not meet the needs of all students, especially the more able musicians.
- Accommodation is poor, mainly due to a lack of soundproofing and cramped conditions in classrooms.
- The extra-curricular and instrumental provision is good.
- Planning and monitoring of the subject are not rigorous enough.

Commentary

89. Standards are average by the end of Year 9. Students' musical ability is average on entry to the school and their levels of achievement are satisfactory. This is so for all groups, including those who are gifted and talented and students with special educational needs. Students have strengths in their performing and analysis work but their compositions often lack structure and musical awareness. The standard of work seen from the current Year 11 is above average and their achievement is good. Performance in the 2003 GCSE examination was above average with many students attaining high grades. These results maintain the high standards noted at the previous inspection. These students are competent performers. Many of their compositions are sophisticated in style, using complex rhythms and harmonies with contrapuntal melodic work.
90. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory for students in Years 7 to 9 and good for those in Years 10 and 11. A strong feature is teachers' good encouragement of students and their positive attitudes when working in paired and group situations. Teachers are good musicians, able to demonstrate tasks clearly in lessons. However, lesson planning for students in Years 7 to 9 is a weakness. It does not ensure that all groups of students, including those who are gifted and talented or have special educational needs, are given work that matches their abilities. At times less competent students need smaller tasks so that they do not become daunted by complex activities. Questioning is occasionally not rigorous enough and endings of lessons are not used effectively to consolidate learning. Relationships are good and most students have positive attitudes to learning. They show consideration for each other during lessons. This is especially commendable given the very cramped and noisy conditions in the music rooms. Where students' achievement is good, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Thorough planning enables students to enhance their musical skills. Although there are satisfactory resources overall, there are insufficient computers and suitable programs for all students.
91. Leadership and management are satisfactory but with some significant weaknesses, including a lack of thoroughness in monitoring and insufficient support from the senior management team. There is not enough strategic planning or clear priorities for development. Assessment is not linked closely to musical activities in lessons. Progress made by different groups of students is not monitored and analysed regularly. Since the previous inspection, the pace of change has been too slow. Issues identified have not all been addressed, so improvement has been only satisfactory. All teachers, including visiting instrumental staff, support each other and give freely of their time. Through the various ensembles and concerts, students enjoy the social opportunities of making music together in school and in the local community.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and reach above average standards in a wide range of activities.
- Teachers have considerable experience and expertise that they use to plan and teach high quality lessons.
- Teaching of lower ability groups is very good, enabling these students to achieve well.
- Teachers assess performance accurately and provide very good advice on what students need to do to improve.
- Leadership and management are very good and ensure that the department is at the leading edge of innovative good practice.

Commentary

92. Assessments at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results are always above average. Students achieve well and many reach standards that are good enough for them to join clubs and

participate in many sports after they have left school. Standards are well above average in dance. Girls achieve particularly well on the GCSE dance course.

93. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to plan lessons that successfully develop students' practical skills and tactical awareness. They make very good use of computer and digital technology to develop students' observational and evaluative skills. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to take on responsibilities in a lesson. They ask them to lead warm ups, to coach each other and to referee. Although some students are reluctant to do this, most do it with confidence and skill. Teachers assess students' work well in practical lessons. They then provide individual students and groups with helpful advice on how they might improve. Assessment is not as strong in GCSE lessons because marking does not give students enough help on how to improve. Students relate well to each other, so practices in pairs and groups work well. Teaching is very good in some lower ability groups. In a Year 9 rugby lesson the teacher was patient, caring and encouraging as the students tried to master the complexities of a scrum. Students were delighted when they successfully achieved the put in and heeled the ball out. Teaching in dance is very good, as was evident in lessons and also in the stunning photographs around the school. In a Year 11 GCSE dance lesson students discussed the accompaniments chosen by different choreographers. They showed a high level of technical language. The teacher's love of and enthusiasm for dance was equally evident in the students. Teachers have high expectations. Students choose activities in Years 10 and 11 but all teachers continue to teach and coach them until the end of Year 11. This has a very positive impact on the standards they achieve.
94. Leadership and management are very good. The department is committed to innovation and continuous improvement. There is a very high level of consistency in teachers' expectations and the way they teach. The head of department observes other teachers informally and good practice is discussed in meetings. More focused formal observations do not take place, however. The school does not therefore know exactly which very good features of teaching and students' learning could be shared with other staff. Accommodation is just satisfactory and the department makes the best of use of what it has. The department is well staffed and students benefit from being frequently taught in small groups. Teachers provide an excellent range of extra-curricular activities that students appreciate. The department has maintained the high standards evident at the time of the previous inspection and has continued to develop its practice.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and consequently students make good progress.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good and support learning very well.
- Leadership and management are good and are developing a sense of teamwork.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their evaluative skills.

Commentary

95. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. Standards of work seen are average. In Years 10 and 11 students use information from other sources for analysis, such as balance sheets and business publications, apply techniques for market research within context and identify the social costs and benefits of proposed business activities. By the end of Year 11 students make good progress and achievement is good.
96. Teaching and learning across both year groups are good. At its best it is stimulating and challenging and students have opportunities to work collaboratively and independently. In a very good Year 10 lesson, a group of lower ability students made very good progress towards understanding the technique of closed questioning as a tool in creating questionnaires.

Students' learning was reinforced by vivid, humorous examples that captured their interest and enabled them to understand the impact of the technique from other people's points of view. All students were all able to apply this technique successfully to their own questionnaires. They were confident about contributing orally to the lesson, encouraged by the teacher's sympathetic responses to their questions. They had opportunities to use ICT when constructing their own questionnaires and the warm up activities combined very good numeracy and literacy exercises. A Year 11 lesson seen was structured as a debate, using rôle play to represent the different aims of stakeholders involved in a proposed business development. Although students found it difficult to evaluate views that were not their own, by the end of the lesson the majority were able to sum up the different social costs and benefits of the scheme. There are not enough opportunities of this sort to help students develop their skills of evaluation.

97. Marking of students' work is constructive and regular checks of their files keep them informed of their progress. There is very little evidence of students using ICT for the presentation of their work. This is because there are not enough computers for them to develop the range and extent of their ICT skills. Good links and relationships have been developed with local businesses. Students benefit from this through work experience and the professional appraisal of their own business plans. Visits to outside businesses and organisations extend and reinforce students' learning experiences.
98. Leadership and management are good. There are particular strengths in leadership, such as the annual departmental reviews, which reflect a strategic approach to planning for improvement. They incorporate a focus on teaching and learning and raising achievement. Staff work together as a very effective team and their delegated responsibilities enable them to work to their areas of strength. Self-evaluation is embedded in the management of the department. Teaching is monitored regularly both through the self-review system and as part of ongoing professional development. Staff continually exchange ideas and share best practice. This makes a strong contribution to the development and improvement of teaching. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

99. It was not possible during the inspection week to see lessons in citizenship and personal, social and health education. Schemes of work and examples of students' work were looked at and the team discussed the work on these courses with students and teachers. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. It is mostly within tutor time and is an integral part of a number of subjects. Analysis of students' work suggests that teaching is good. Students' work also suggests that they achieve well in lessons and show good attitudes to work. The course makes a good contribution to students' personal development and to their ability to play a positive role in school life. The sex and drug education programmes enable teachers to give good guidance on these aspects. The co-ordinator organises the courses well.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below the levels expected.
- Coverage of citizenship across the curriculum is unsatisfactory and National Curriculum requirements are not met.
- Most teachers do not bear citizenship well enough in mind when planning lessons or make citizenship elements clear to students.
- The school's management of the subject is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

100. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are below those expected and students' achievement is unsatisfactory. This applies to boys and girls and all levels of attainment. There is some direct teaching of citizenship in personal, social and health education lessons. These lessons were not seen during the inspection so it is not possible to make overall judgements on teaching and learning. There are insufficient assessment procedures for tracking students' attainment and progress.
101. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Citizenship education is mainly through work in other subjects. Coverage is inconsistent. Few subjects provide adequately for citizenship and it is not in the forefront of planning for most lessons.
102. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory. Insufficient attention has been given to National Curriculum requirements. Although the school is not meeting the national requirements, there are strong elements of citizenship education in many areas of its work. This less formal provision is based mainly on the school's strong adherence to the Charter of Values it promotes.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, ten 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	1	0.0	80.1	0.0	23.7	0.0	29.9
Biology	10	60.0	65.2	10.0	11.1	18.0	20.6
Business studies	10	80.0	76.4	20.0	16.3	27.0	26.2
Chemistry	13	84.6	72.7	15.4	13.9	84.6	72.7
Communication studies	5	66.0	86.4	20.0	23.8	20.0	32.0
Drama	2	100.0	86.5	0.0	19.6	35.0	30.6
English language	6	100.0	82.9	33.3	17.5	40.0	28.7
English literature	6	100.0	86.9	16.7	19.1	35.0	30.2
French	2	50.0	78.2	0.0	18.9	10.0	27.6
Design and technology	1	100	74.9	100	15.1	50.0	25.3
General studies	49	55.1	73.9	4.1	17.8	14.1	25.7
Geography	2	100.0	74.3	50.0	19.8	45.0	26.5
German	1	100.0	81.5	100.0	19.3	60.0	28.9
History	1	100.0	80.7	100.0	19.5	60.0	28.6
ICT	3	100.0	67.0	33.3	10.9	33.3	21.4
Mathematics	11	81.8	61.9	0.0	17.1	24.5	22.1
Psychology	8	37.5	69.7	12.5	16.7	13.8	24.1
Physics	7	85.7	68.6	0.0	14.4	20.0	22.7
Religious studies	7	71.4	80.2	0.0	22.6	22.9	29.8
Sociology	9	100.0	71.8	33.3	18.4	41.1	25.4
Sports/PE Studies	3	66.7	73.2	0.0	11.4	16.7	23.1

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	7	100.0	98.6	28.6	50.2	68.6	87.5
Biology	26	92.3	96.4	26.9	39.2	70.8	78.6
Business studies	33	100.0	98.7	27.3	36.8	79.4	80.1
Chemistry	20	80.0	97.6	45.0	49.0	71.0	84.1
Communication studies	18	100.0	99.4	5.6	37.8	65.6	82.1
English language	21	100.0	99.4	14.3	36.3	69.5	80.9
English literature	26	100.0	99.5	30.8	46.5	76.9	86.5
French	2	100.0	98.8	0.0	51.5	70.0	87.6
Design and technology	2	100.0	97.8	0.0	35.0	60.0	77.9
General studies	68	98.5	94.7	29.4	31.0	75.3	73.1
Geography	7	100	98.7	28.6	44.5	88.6	84.0
German	1	100.0	98.4	100.0	47.9	120.0	84.8
History	18	100.0	99.0	33.3	44.6	76.7	84.6
Information technology	17	100.0	95.6	29.4	24.6	74.1	69.5
Mathematics	29	93.1	96.7	58.6	55.6	89.7	88.8
Music	1	100.0	98.8	0.0	38.9	60.0	81.1
Psychology	4	100.0	97.4	25.0	42.7	75.0	81.8
Physics	9	88.9	96.7	33.3	44.6	66.7	81.7
Religious studies	6	100.0	98.8	16.7	46.7	70.0	85.6
Sociology	32	100.0	98.2	37.5	44.3	81.3	83.6
Sports/PE studies	10	100.0	75.2	10.0	30.9	72.0	75.2
Business (VCE)	10	80.0	88.6	0.0	20.6	44.0	60.1
Performing arts (VCE)	8	100.0	94.3	87.5	50.4	97.5	77.8
Information technology (VCE)	2	66.7	87.2	0.0	27.9	26.7	64.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved since the recent public examinations and are now above average.
- Students are achieving well because of the good teaching and their own positive attitudes to the subject.
- Too few male students are choosing to study the subject in the sixth form.

Commentary

103. Results in the 2003 A-level examinations were below average and achievement was unsatisfactory. This was because poor attendance of a small number of students led to their underachievement. The AS results that year were above average and achievement was good.
104. The standard of work of the Year 13 students now exceeds national expectations and levels of achievement are good for male and female students. The significant rise in standards is due to effective teaching and students' very positive attitudes to the subject. Students in Year 12 are working at average levels of attainment and their achievement is good when account is taken of their prior performance at GCSE. They have a good understanding of the context in which writers work and the cultural and social issues which influence them. They are confident and enthusiastic in putting forward their own ideas about literature and offering imaginative ways to interpret a text. Students in Year 13 have good analytical skills and an independent approach to their work. Reading skills are well developed and their critical writing is of a high standard. All students have positive attitudes to the subject and work hard.
105. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and they convey their own enthusiasm for the subject to the students who respond by working productively as individuals and in groups. The pace of lessons is challenging and expectations are high. Teachers encourage students to follow their own lines of enquiry and to take responsibility for their own learning. Good use is made of a range of questioning techniques both to extend learning and to test understanding. The subject is very popular with female students, although a few able and committed males choose to study the subject each year. A more equitable gender balance would improve the quality of students' educational experience in discussion and group work.
106. The leadership and management of English are good. There is a sense of common purpose and a commitment to improving further the quality of provision through the sharing of good practice. Teachers have high aspirations for the students and they monitor and evaluate their progress regularly and guide them on how to improve. Students speak highly about the advice and support they receive. There has been good progress since the last inspection in broadening the curriculum and in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

107. Provision for the development of key skills in language and literacy across the curriculum is good. There is evidence 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 history are confident and articulate when evaluating their work and they have developed very good skills of independent study. This was also seen in the sociology course where students communicated well with each other and the teacher because of their fluent and precise use of specialist terms.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very good examination results.
- Teachers are confident and have very good subject knowledge.
- The marking of students' work is very good.
- There are insufficient opportunities for independent learning.
- Very good working relationships exist between students and teachers.

Commentary

108. Examination results in mathematics have consistently been above average since the previous inspection. A-level results in 2003 dropped slightly but remained above average, whereas results at AS level remained well above average. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average and represents good achievement. The school offers more able students the opportunity to study further mathematics. These students are confidently expected to obtain very high grades in both mathematics and further mathematics.
109. Advanced level teaching is good. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and lessons are well planned with clear objectives that are conveyed to students. The demands of the syllabus and the limited time available, particularly at AS level, have resulted in lessons that are teacher dominated with only limited opportunities for independent learning. The marking of students' work is very good and constructive written feedback helps them improve their future performance. Very good working relationships exist between students and teachers, as a result of which students are comfortable when approaching their teachers to request help and guidance.
110. There is inadequate provision of non-advanced level courses in mathematics. Students who have not obtained Grade C at GCSE level are given the opportunity to attend re-sit classes but there is no provision for key skills in the sixth form.
111. Leadership of the department is very good and there is a team commitment to achieving very high standards. Management is good with clear guidelines given for teaching and for monitoring of teaching and learning. Thorough analysis of students' performance has been established; students are aware of targets based on their prior attainment and there are regular assessments and monitoring of progress.

Mathematics across the curriculum

112. Most students enter the sixth form with at least a grade C GCSE pass in mathematics and are able to apply their numeracy skills in other subject areas. In science and geography, for example, students make good use of their mathematical skills as they analyse, represent and interpret data. There is, however, inadequate provision for students with limited attainment in mathematics to improve their skills. Students on the intermediate vocational course are provided with a course in application of number but for other students there is no key skills provision.

SCIENCE

Biology was inspected in depth. Chemistry and physics were sampled. One lesson was seen in each subject. The students make very good progress in both subjects and achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge of biology.
- There is too small a proportion of higher grades at A-level.
- Students have a very good attitude to learning.
- A very good range of texts supports students' learning.
- The monitoring of key skills is inadequate.

Commentary

113. A-level results in 2003 were above average in the A-E grade range, but below average in the higher grades A and B. Girls gained higher grades than boys. The number of students studying biology has risen in recent years. Almost all students complete the course.
114. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are above national expectations and better than last year's examination results indicate. This represents good achievement for many of the students who enter the sixth form with average standards at GCSE level. The good achievement results from strategies developed to increase the number of higher grades through very regular assessment of their attainment and progress.
115. Students have a very positive attitude to their studies, which has helped them to make considerable gains in knowledge and understanding. Although the key skills of numeracy and ICT are well used, they are not effectively monitored or assessed. Consequently the students are unsure of how well they are developing in these areas. The use of ICT away from the classroom gives students opportunities to develop their independent research skills. Making PowerPoint presentations of personally researched topics to their class enhances students' communication skills.
116. Teaching is good and has led to good learning. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject, which enables them to clarify any misconceptions the students may have. Planning is very good and, because of this, regular investigations prepare the students very well for the new format of practical examinations. Students are very well supported by up-to-date texts which allow them to extend their learning at home. Students know what they need to do to improve as a result of testing and feedback by their teachers using examination board criteria and grades.
117. The management of biology is satisfactory and the head of department ensures that students are aware of their overall progress, despite paying insufficient attention to the assessment of key skills. By making monthly progress checks the department copes well with difficulties resulting from the wide range of students' prior attainment. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching have identified ways in which teaching may be improved and this has led to improved learning. The provision has seen satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The scheme of work is in place and carefully linked to the new A-level syllabus. There is now greater use of ICT that allows students to research using the Internet.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge that they use to support students well at all levels of study.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good.
- Results in A-level computing are very good.
- The best practice in teaching is not sufficiently shared among colleagues.

Commentary

118. Standards overall are satisfactory. Results in the GNVQ examination are broadly average. Students entering this course generally have low standards in ICT and so the course serves them well. Results in the AVCE in ICT are below average. Whilst students do particularly well in coursework, the examination component of this programme is very poorly done. Students are retaking their examination at the end of Year 12 and they are now much better prepared for this. Results in both the AS and A2 computing examinations are well above average. A significant proportion of students in Year 13 do better than was anticipated when they entered the course.
119. The standard of work seen during the inspection is average. All students are conscientious and invest considerable energy in completing the project element of their courses. The range of themes chosen in both Year 12 and Year 13 indicates a degree of self-direction, although the research in the project work of some of the less able is more contrived. The work of one student, studying AVCE in ICT in Year 12 was of exceptional quality. Focussing on the database needs of a motorcar franchise, it was almost the equivalent of a professional study. Although males outnumber females on the courses, their performance in external examinations is similar.
120. Teaching and learning are good. In A-level Computing students are prepared for examinations very efficiently. No time is wasted and the focus of each session is rigorously maintained. In the AVCE programme a wider range of teaching styles is employed to address the needs of a more varied curriculum. Extensive use of starter activities and handouts is made in all lessons. Students are secure and well guided. Their commitment to succeed is impressive and, though generally reluctant to participate in debate, they have interesting ideas. Not enough opportunities are provided in lessons for students to explore their ideas.
121. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department already has a clear idea of the strengths and weakness of the provision and how to address them. An effective strategy is in place to accommodate the changing needs of students across the ability range. Numbers on courses have increased noticeably as a direct result of this. Staff are well prepared to deal with a small but significant number of students from other schools, particularly on the AVCE course. Good practice resides within the team but expertise in using different teaching and learning styles and coaching for examination success is not shared fully across the team.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

122. The development of ICT skills across the curriculum is delivered within individual subjects. Most students cope with the demands of their other courses. In some subjects, such as religious education and sociology, students and teachers have limited access to ICT so it is not used as much as it could be to support teaching and learning. This is not the case in science and design and technology where good use is made of ICT. In all science subjects students successfully create a multimedia presentation to give to their peers.

HUMANITIES

123. Religious education, history and sociology were inspected in depth; psychology and geography were sampled. Last year's A-level results in psychology were below average. In the lessons seen the teaching was good but overall it is only satisfactory. Problems with staffing last year have been resolved but have yet to have a significant influence on examination results. Current work indicates that students are now making much better progress. Their essays show a good use of specialist language and concepts and they are achieving grades that are at least in line with expectations. They are orally proficient and play an active role in classroom discussions. A-level results in geography in 2003 were above average. During the inspection two lessons of geography were observed. Standards at the end of Years 12 and 13 are average for the course. Teaching and learning are good.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and enables students to learn independently.
- The contribution made to students' personal development is very good
- The standard of written work is above average.
- Very good leadership and management enable students to achieve well.

Commentary

124. AS level results in 2003 were average. In lessons and work seen in Year 12, teachers challenge students to analyse material and form judgments about a range of philosophical and ethical issues. Students demonstrate a good understanding of philosophical and religious concepts and an ability to produce well-structured, balanced arguments. The teachers' very good use of discussion and their high expectations contribute very well to students' ability to think independently.
125. Results at A-level in 2003 were below average. However, current standards in the work seen were average. Students demonstrate their ability to use ethical language and this enables them to compare a wide range of opinions about moral issues. Through the teachers' challenging and enabling approach, students use their skills of analysis to draw out ideas and to make distinctions between opinions, beliefs and facts. Discussion enables students to increase the depth of their learning and to respect the views of others.
126. Teachers have high expectations of students and, in consequence, students have equally high expectations of themselves. Students use their ICT skills well for research purposes. A lack of ICT facilities prevents students from developing this facility and raising their standards even further. Students develop their ability to investigate and interpret facts and this allows them to move quickly into the key skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis. They achieve well and make good progress. Assessment of students' work is good and teachers make very helpful comments on their work. These procedures provide a good basis for assessing what students know and understand.
127. Very good leadership and management of the subject ensure that students are provided with a rich curriculum. The number of students now taking religious studies at AS and A-level has increased considerably. The subject makes a substantial contribution to the personal, spiritual and moral development of students. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good, reflected in very good achievement.
- Students' excellent attitudes and high regard for their teachers are a significant element in their very good learning,
- Assessment is very good.
- A few students do not read widely enough beyond their textbooks and study notes.

Commentary

128. A-level results in 2003 were below average with fewer students gaining the higher grades A or B than nationally. All students gained at least a pass grade. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards are good and achievement very good. This is due to the continuous improvement in teaching and the monitoring of students' progress by the department. Students compile large volumes of accurately completed work revealing very detailed knowledge and understanding of the selected topics. Assessment is good, so students receive a high level of feedback on their work and know what they need to do to improve. Most students produce very good extended writing, making good use of supporting evidence and appropriate subject-specific terminology. Students respond to challenges such as: 'To what extent was the disaster for the Conservative Party in the General Election in 1997 the result of failings within the party?'. They were quickly able to identify key factors from a range of sources and discussed these in detail and with confidence. Students use ICT for research and communication. In classroom discussions on historical issues they articulate their views clearly and convincingly, drawing on a range of evidence to support their views. They demonstrate independence in their writing and the ability to draw on feedback from the teacher and others in the class in order to improve their work. The achievement of the most able students is very good and the standards they achieve are high.
129. Teaching and learning are very good. The detailed, high-quality study notes and guided assignments, linked clearly to examination criteria, reflect teachers' considerable subject expertise. A few students, however, are almost entirely dependent on these and their textbooks and do not read widely enough around the subject for most of the course, although there is evidence of broader reading in some well researched personal studies. Students' excellent attitudes are evident in their enthusiastic discussions of historical topics as well as in their very well organised and extensively annotated and highlighted files. They work well collaboratively to draw in relevant information from the wide range of historical sources provided. Examination and essay writing skills are regularly practised. Students' individual learning needs are very well met because teachers give freely of their time to help students know what they need to do to improve their work. Students are highly appreciative of this and of the feedback that they receive from marking and whole class and individual guidance. They feel well known and supported by their teachers and feel confident about the standards at which they are working.
130. Leadership and management in history are very good. There is an energetic pursuit of varied approaches and improved quality of teaching. There is a detailed analysis of examination performance and student progress against their target grades. The department makes excellent use of links with Liverpool and Oxford universities to inspire and encourage students to continue and extend their study of history. The school responded to the long-term absence of the head of department in 2003 by reallocating aspects of the teaching and strengthening staffing in order to maintain standards in history. The very good provision identified in the previous inspection has been sustained.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use a good variety of teaching methods to motivate and challenge students to achieve high standards.
- Good examination results are better than those predicted from previous GCSE results.
- Students have very positive attitudes, respond well and enjoy the course.
- Both teachers and students make insufficient use of ICT .

Commentary

131. The examination results in 2003 at both AS and A-level were above average. School information indicates that students made good progress, achieving results above those predicted by their GCSE results. There has been a steady improvement in these results over the last few years.
132. Work seen in Years 12 and 13 shows that students have very good knowledge of the subject. Students' essays indicate that they use specialist language well and have good skills of evaluation and analysis. A Year 13 group were able to bring together knowledge from several areas of the course when studying the sociology of religion. The majority of students have taken this subject at GCSE level but a significant number have not. Despite this variation in experience, all students are achieving well. They achieve grades well above those predicted by their GCSE results.
133. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to prepare lessons that are interesting and challenging. They use a wide variety of teaching methods to bring the subject alive and as a result students enjoy lessons. Relationships in the classroom are positive; students are thoroughly involved in lively class discussions based on sound factual research. Some of the resources used are dated and lack colour and vitality. Good use is made of a variety of learning materials, although insufficient use is made of ICT. Students' essays are very well marked with good feedback.
134. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Good monitoring ensured that an accurate review and evaluation process has taken place. The subject leader has a clear vision for the future and is committed to raising standards. The steady improvement in all areas reflects her hard work. As a result improvement since the last inspection has been very good.
135. The current accommodation leaves much to be desired, especially in the difficulties in accessing ICT. Plans are in hand to improve this. The quality of school-prepared resources is not as good as it could be.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

136. Design and technology was sampled as part of the inspection. Students who took their A-level examinations in 2003 did not do as well in Year 12 as they did in Year 13 but achieved their predicted A-level results. Achievement is satisfactory overall. The A-level product design course is popular with both boys and girls. Many students enter the course with above average GCSE grades in graphics or electronics and therefore expand their range of practical skills. Teaching is good or very good, providing students with every opportunity to work towards the higher grades. Lessons are well planned, often using an interactive whiteboard. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students in Year 12 were seen to be very proficient in the use of a computer program to create three-dimensional drawings based on a wide range of ideas. Coursework is well presented and makes considerable use of ICT for

graphics and electronic design work. Year 13 students produce very good research sections in their work and learn to use advanced computer-aided manufacturing techniques.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Performing arts

Provision in performing arts is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students' levels of achievement are very good.
- Students produce accomplished practical work because of the very good teaching.
- Leadership of the subject is very good.
- Students are highly motivated, showing commitment to and enjoyment of extensive extra-curricular opportunities.
- Poor accommodation, meagre funding and lack of technical equipment and support restrict what students and teachers can do.

Commentary

137. Results were above average for Year 13 students in 2003. Almost all Year 12 students continued to Year 13, with several choosing to pursue a career in performing arts. Standards of work of the current Years 12 and 13 students are above average. This means that the achievement of all students is very good, reflecting the consistently high quality of teaching. Students use technical language competently and support each other effectively in practical work. The varied, extensive enrichment and workshop opportunities give them an awareness of a wide range of theatre and dance, which they ably illustrate in their lessons. This helps to develop their independent learning skills.
138. Students learn well because of very good teaching. Teachers show considerable subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. Working relationships are excellent. Students are inspired to produce high quality performances. Because of the extensive use of video recording in lessons, they are able to reflect immediately upon and evaluate their own practical work. These videos build up into an extensive library, so that students and their teachers can assess progress constantly during the course. This also ensures that any technical errors are addressed and corrected. Teachers encourage and challenge all students, because they are sensitive to their individual needs. Planning is thorough and very good co-operation between all staff promotes a consistent and systematic approach. Very poor accommodation severely limits what can be undertaken in lessons. Very often lessons take place on the stage when physical education lessons are being held in the hall. Other lessons take place in the local church hall, as the school has insufficient suitable locations for performing arts disciplines. There is no technical support for the subject and overall resources are unsatisfactory.
139. Leadership and management are very good. Students' progress and their attendance are carefully monitored. There is a common approach to target setting and a consistent approach to assessment, which ensure that students understand their strengths and weaknesses. Careful monitoring results in a consistent approach by all staff because in this way the best practice in teaching is shared. Although performing arts is a relatively new subject in the sixth form, the department has already gained a deserved reputation within the local community for high standards and a professional approach to performances.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress as a result of good teaching and excellent relationships between students and teachers.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities and these make a strong contribution to students' personal development.
- The leadership is totally focused on improving both standards and provision.
- There are not enough opportunities for independent learning.

Commentary

140. Results at A-level in 2003 were average overall and below average for the higher grades A and B. The results at AS level were well above average for the higher grades. Standards of work seen are average. The standard of practical assessment work seen at A-level was above average. By the end of Year 13 students make good progress.
141. Teaching is good. Classroom relationships are excellent and teaching inspires students to contribute and develop their own ideas. In a very good Year 13 lesson seen, students of widely differing abilities readily asked questions and contributed their own experiences. All students successfully explained the performance of gross and fine motor skills. Their understanding was consolidated through worksheets that encouraged them to construct their own definitions of concepts. There are not enough opportunities such as this that encourage students to learn independently and develop the range and depth of their understanding. Students' work files are very neatly presented and their work is tested and marked regularly. If marking were more diagnostic, this would direct students more clearly to the higher levels of achievement.
142. The community sports leadership award gives students opportunities to develop their skills of organisation and planning. They coach pupils in local primary schools as part of their training and the course is equally accessible to those students who are not studying physical education. There are opportunities for taking responsibility and many students help with and run school clubs and assist with lessons for the younger years. These make a considerable contribution to the development of students' personal and social skills. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive and many students participate in senior teams.
143. Leadership is very good and management is good. Planning shows strategic awareness. The appointment of a school sports co-ordinator has maximised the funding available and will develop work in local primary schools. Teaching and the curriculum are innovative with the aim of maximising students' learning. A wealth of ICT resources provides valuable tools for analysis and observation that enhance teaching throughout the school.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and reinforced through excellent classroom relationships.
- Attainment data is analysed rigorously and informs planning for improvement.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Students do not record their main points of learning at the end of lessons.

Commentary

144. Results at A-level were above average but below for the higher grades A and B. Results at AS level were above average overall and in line for the higher grades. All students gained a pass in the AVCE course. By the end of Year 13 all students achieve well.
145. Teaching is good and relationships between staff and students are excellent. Teachers consistently probe what students know and challenge and extend students' learning. As a result, students often make very good progress. The demands made of students are sensitively matched to their needs. Teachers' continual cross-referencing of previously learned concepts often sparks discussions among students. Teachers help students to take their levels of understanding further through astute questioning. In two of the lessons seen, students did not formally bring together or record what they had learned. There is not a sharp enough focus on summarising work at the end of lessons and students do not have opportunities to record any new learning points. In a Year 12 GNVQ lesson seen, students gave PowerPoint presentations on customer service that showed high levels of ICT and communication skills and very good coverage of the assessment objectives.
146. Marking and ongoing assessment are very good. Comments made are constructive and prompt the higher attaining students to further levels of achievement and generally provide clear, precise guidance for improvement.
147. Leadership and management are good. Care is taken over the choice of texts used in lessons. Schemes of work are in the process of being enriched further through the development of lesson plans that focus on different teaching methods. The curriculum is reviewed regularly and this ensures that the needs of all students are met. Data from examination results is analysed rigorously. Value added indicators, such as performance in relation to predicted grades, helps to identify the performance of particular groups of students and inform target setting. The department has developed its own library of ICT resources that is constantly updated and is available for students to use through an internal booking system.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

148. General studies was sampled as part of the inspection. Last year's examination results at A-level were above average but AS results were well below the national average, with a large number of students achieving grades that were well below their ability level. A significant proportion of students do not enter for the examination. The current work seen indicates that students are underachieving. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have little or no record of their work in folders. The quality of learning is poor. The quality of teaching and learning varies considerably but is mostly unsatisfactory. Both teachers and students give the subject a low priority. There is no significant evidence of assignments being set or marked. The school knows that there is a problem with the way the course is organised and has recently appointed a new subject leader to reorganise the course.
149. Religious education is part of the general studies course. Because of the problems with the way the course is organised and taught this year, students are not receiving their entitlement to religious education in the sixth form. The personal, social, health and citizenship course includes some useful topics but is heavily weighted towards preparation for higher education. It lacks a rationale and aims and objectives, and emphasises knowledge at the expense of understanding and skill.
150. There are opportunities for students to participate in sport but few students, other than those following an advanced course in physical education, take up this option.

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

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