

INSPECTION REPORT

BOSTON HIGH SCHOOL

Boston

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120640

Headteacher: Mr Barry Searles

Lead inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones

Dates of inspection: 22nd-25th March 2004

Inspection number: 264057

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	801
School address:	Spilsby Road Boston Lincolnshire
Postcode:	PE21 9PF
Telephone number:	01205 310505
Fax number:	01205 350235
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Simon Horniblow
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- Boston High School is a selective school for girls which admits male students to the sixth form, to a maximum of 10 per cent - an increased proportion since the last inspection.
- The school is smaller than most secondary schools; it has an average sized sixth form, which is smaller than it was at the last inspection.
- When they join Year 7 students' attainment is above average; a smaller proportion has very high attainment compared with other grammar schools.
- Student mobility, those leaving or joining the school mid-course, is much the same as nationally.
- The school draws its students from a wide area around Boston. The students come from backgrounds in which the social circumstances, while varying, are broadly average compared with national data.
- The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average.
- There is a low proportion of students from minority ethnic groups among whom there are a very small number whose home language is not English.
- A very small number of students has special educational needs which relate to behavioural difficulties and physical or hearing impairment.

- The school is involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Young Enterprise, Millennium Volunteers and Healthy Schools.
- It has received the School Achievement Award in 2003 for the improvement in higher grades at GCSE.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2918	M L Glynne-Jones	Lead inspector	
9188	J McHugh	Lay inspector	
21954	T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design *
32149	N Dry	Team inspector	Mathematics in the main school
17156	E Graham	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education
22458	G McGinn	Team inspector	Citizenship History
31850	D Nevens	Team inspector	Music *
23569	D Nicholl	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages * Special educational needs
33649	H Purcer	Team inspector	Physical education
2025	P Round	Team inspector	Design and technology
33695	C Waterstone	Team inspector	English *
3735	A Webb	Team inspector	Science in the main school Physics in the sixth form
30978	E White	Team inspector	Geography *
27984	A Whitehall	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form

* inspected in the main school and the sixth form

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education Ltd
102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL53 7JX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	19
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	22
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	51

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This school has serious weaknesses. It is an **ineffective school**. Overall, while standards are above average they represent only satisfactory achievement. Students' good attitudes and the generally good teaching account for standards being maintained despite unsatisfactory management and governance and poor leadership by the headteacher. Value for money is satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is a lack of vision and sense of purpose in the leadership of the school and inattention to the school's central task of promoting good achievement.
- The lack of strategic planning, combined with ineffective self-evaluation, has significantly weakened the running of the school.
- High standards have been maintained to which the motivation and maturity of the students contribute significantly.
- The governing body has a poor understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has not ensured that statutory requirements are fully met.
- School arrangements for providing students with support, advice and guidance are unsatisfactory although the students appreciate the willingness of many staff to give help when it is requested.
- Assessment persists as a weakness from the last inspection as does the provision for ICT which is poor.
- Provision for music is very good with outstanding opportunities for participation in musical activities.

Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. The trend in GCSE results reflects the national trend and shows steady improvement in A*-C grades, but the Year 9 test results are not keeping pace with the rise in national results. There is very good improvement in A-level results, to which male students contribute significantly. The improvement is unsatisfactory on each of the three key issues reported last time: assessment and marking, provision in ICT and personal, social and health education.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

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

Achievement is **satisfactory**. Standards are above average in the main school, Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form. Results have been maintained at well above national averages by Year 9, at GCSE and at A-level. However, when compared with *similar schools* (all those schools nationally whose students gained similar Year 6 test results) the Year 9 results in 2003 are well below average. At GCSE in 2003 the results are well below average when compared with the school's own Year 9 results in 2002 - (*the similar schools comparison*).

In 2003 the Year 9 test results were well above the national average overall and were well above average in English and mathematics; in science the results were in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. However, when compared with *similar schools* these results were well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. At GCSE in 2003 the results show a fall from 2002 although nationally the level was sustained. At A-level there is considerable variation in the subject results in 2003.

Students show **good** personal qualities in their attitudes and behaviour, which in the sixth form are very good. Their social and moral development is good, and their cultural development satisfactory, but their spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are good across the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education with good enrichment activities. There is **good** teaching and learning overall although assessment is unsatisfactory. While the curriculum is satisfactory overall, provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship and for careers education is unsatisfactory. The provision for special educational needs is poor. There are unsatisfactory arrangements for students' guidance, welfare and involvement. Good links are established with the community and links with parents and local schools are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are **unsatisfactory**. There is no clear vision or drive for effectiveness from the top, with deleterious effect on the work for development by senior staff. As a consequence, morale is low among senior and middle managers and among older students. The governing body has not held the school to account for the standards achieved or for the quality of education it provides in all areas of its work. There is no evidence to suggest that the headteacher is capable of moving the school forward as required without very considerable external support.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have strong views about where the school's strengths and weakness lie, shown by their comments on returns to the school's own autumn term questionnaire. These comments, together with those from the very small number at the pre-inspection meeting, show that they are very loyal to the school, but highly critical of aspects of its leadership and management as well as of the support and guidance given to students. Both parents and students are appreciative of the high standards achieved and the efforts being made to listen to their views through consultation on issues such as bullying, uniform and specialist college status. However, parents are not made aware of the action taken following consultation and students are frustrated at the lack of feedback they receive from senior management about their suggestions and concerns. There are concerns about bullying and the inconsistent use of homework among parents, both of which were echoed by students in discussion. The inspection team finds these concerns justified. The support and guidance available to students are unsatisfactory, homework is not consistently provided and improvements in the school's handling of bullying have yet to permeate all year groups.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure a strong lead from the top in moving the school forward, motivating staff and raising morale in the school community;
- give immediate priority to ensuring that students' examination preparation is rigorously supported in all subjects;
- implement rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluation through which the headteacher, together with senior and middle managers, ensures that every aspect of provision works effectively to students' benefit and promotes good achievement;
- report fully to full governing body meetings on the findings of the school's monitoring in terms of school strengths and areas requiring improvement;
- ensure that all staff with management responsibility are held rigorously to account for the quality of their area of work and are supported thoroughly in this process by senior managers and the governing body through the school's performance management;
- implement whole-school policy and procedures for assessment and marking with regular checks to ensure that they are implemented consistently well across the school;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- implement the ICT curriculum in full in Years 7 to 9;
- implement the Code of Practice for special educational needs;
- ensure that the requirements for child protection are met.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a satisfactory sixth form in which high standards have been maintained. However, good teaching and learning in lessons lead to only satisfactory achievement in relation to students' standards at GCSE. This is because within subjects the overall quality is no better than satisfactory in about half the subjects inspected. Leadership, management and governance are unsatisfactory while cost-effectiveness is satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- ❑ students' mature attitudes and willingness to take responsibility contribute significantly to the school's ethos and to their own success;
- ❑ students are disadvantaged by the weakness in assessment and marking which persists in the sixth form, although there is good practice to draw on in physics, geography and music;
- ❑ very good teaching and learning in physics, supported by the excellent subject knowledge of staff, lead to good achievement.

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	English: satisfactory : students' average standards represent satisfactory achievement; differences in teaching approaches are a limiting factor on their progress in some lessons. French: satisfactory : the below average standards represent satisfactory achievement; the school's guidance on choosing French at A-level draws insufficiently on specialist advice.
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory : students' achievement is unsatisfactory given their prior attainment at GCSE; weakness in assessment practice is a main reason. The new leadership is establishing a good basis for improvement.
Science	Physics: good : very good teaching and learning in a very positive learning environment result in good achievement.
Information and communication technology	No courses in this area were inspected in detail. A Year 13 lesson was sampled.
Humanities	Geography: good : students' very good attitudes to their work aids their learning, supported by enthusiastic teaching based on good subject expertise.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	No courses in this area were inspected in detail. Lessons in Year 12 textiles and Year 13 product design were sampled.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design: unsatisfactory : the satisfactory learning and teaching are insufficient to raise students' achievement above unsatisfactory because of the negative effects of poor departmental leadership and management. Music: very good : curriculum leadership, teaching, independent learning and enrichment are very good, resulting in satisfactory achievement and high levels of student satisfaction with their courses.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	No courses in this area were inspected in detail. A Year 13 lesson in physical education was sampled.

Business	No courses in this area were inspected in detail.
Curriculum area	Evaluation
General education	Lessons in Year 13 citizenship, general studies and personal, social and health education were sampled.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The issues relating to the main school apply equally to the sixth form. In particular, guidance and specialist advice about advanced and other course options are inadequate. There are unsatisfactory arrangements for sixth-form induction, although some improvement is scheduled for the students in the current Year 11. Students' access to impartial advice about courses available for those leaving school after GCSE is limited. The newly appointed careers adviser and head of sixth form have set some changes in place for the next academic year with the potential for good improvement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The weaknesses in the school's leadership, management and governance apply equally to the sixth form: they are **unsatisfactory**. Pockets of good practice are the result of individual vision and endeavour by heads of subject. Key issues from the previous inspection remain areas of weakness or inconsistency in the running of the sixth form. The school has failed to assure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment where there has been staff absence or where there are known weaknesses. Some students expressed deep anxiety that their results will not be as good as they need to be because they are not receiving the academic guidance they need. Inspectors find that their anxiety is fully justified.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

In discussion students offer a very mature and balanced picture of the school. They are keen to show appreciation of staff expertise in setting challenging tasks and the range of opportunities available, yet are highly critical of several aspects of school life. Their questionnaire returns and comments in discussions highlight serious concerns about the advice and guidance available and the way the school responds to students and takes their opinions into consideration. Many feel there is no adult in school they would turn to if they had a personal problem. The school council is viewed as having little impact on issues that matter. Students are appreciative of the help given over university admission forms. However, they are critical of the school's system of allocating course places, feeling that they are pressured into taking subjects they are good at rather than those that suit their future career choice and aspirations.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, Years 10 and 11, and in the seven subjects inspected in detail in the sixth form. Standards are above average by Year 9, by Year 11 and in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards have been maintained over recent years.
- Compared with students' prior attainment these results have been well below average or in the bottom 5 per cent nationally in Year 9 tests and have ranged from well below average to average at GCSE.
- Unsatisfactory practice in assessment and marking is a major factor in students' achievement being no better than satisfactory overall in the work seen. This persists as a weakness although reported as a key issue at the previous inspection.
- In its day-to-day work the school does not monitor the progress of students with special needs, those who are gifted and talented or those from ethnic minority groups; it has no way of knowing whether students in these groups do as well as their peers.

Commentary

1. Students did very well in 2003: results were either well above the national average or in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally both in Year 9 tests and at GCSE. Trends over time show that results are not keeping pace with the national rise in Year 9, but at GCSE are broadly reflecting the national trend. The value-added measure for GCSE, a C (average) shows that students' gains over Years 10 and 11 were much the same as they were nationally. The gains over Years 7 to 9, measured using students' actual Year 6 results, are well below (E) the gains made by schools whose students gained similar Year 6 results.
2. In 2003, students did better in some subjects at GCSE than they did in others. This applied to French, geography, history, mathematics and Spanish, and the difference compared favourably with the national picture. By contrast, students did less well in art and design, dual award science, English language and English literature, the difference comparing unfavourably with the national picture. In art and design and mathematics students are not equally well prepared in all aspects of the work. In English, work is not effectively planned for the needs of higher and lower attainers in each class. In all four subjects, the weakness in assessment is a factor.
3. The code for special needs requires the school to provide individual education plans for students who have special needs. This requirement is not being met. Neither is the school making additional provision for this small number of students in lessons as is expected. Consequently these students do not have learning targets to support their progress and their teachers do not have adequate information to enable them to plan appropriately. Since no targets exist, there is no mechanism for reviewing students' progress twice a year, as is required. For these reasons it was not possible during the inspection to reach a judgement on the achievement of students with special needs. In a small number of lessons taught by members of the school's pastoral team students' needs are known, the teacher plans well to take account of them and the students make good progress.
4. The school has not identified its gifted and talented students so it is impossible to make a secure judgement about their achievement. This is equally true for those students from minority ethnic groups. There is no evidence that any group of students is advantaged or disadvantaged by the school's overall provision although there are instances of underachievement in some subjects. There is evidence that inadequate assessment and marking are a limiting factor in students' achievement.

Sixth form

5. Results at A-level in 2003 in comparison with national averages for subjects show standards that were:

<i>well above average</i>	<i>chemistry, design and technology, general studies, history, ICT, music</i>
<i>above average</i>	<i>religious studies</i>
<i>average</i>	<i>biology, English literature, mathematics</i>
<i>below average</i>	<i>business studies, classical studies, French, physics</i>
<i>well below average</i>	<i>drama, geography</i>

The comparisons are made where the number of students taking the subject was five or more. Relative differences between subjects were much the same as they were nationally. Where female students numbered five or more, the results show the positive effect (raising the comparisons by 'one notch') of the contribution of male students in design and technology, mathematics and music.

6. In the work seen in the seven subjects inspected in detail standards in comparison with the national expectation were:

<i>above average</i>	<i>physics</i>
<i>average</i>	<i>English literature, geography, French, mathematics, music</i>
<i>below average</i>	<i>art and design</i>

For most subjects this represents satisfactory achievement from students' standards at GCSE. In mathematics this represents unsatisfactory achievement compared with the students' GCSE results and, in physics, good achievement. In both these subjects the quality of teaching is a significant factor, being very good in physics while satisfactory in mathematics. Improvements being made by new management in mathematics are not yet showing a positive effect on standards.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.7 (41.9)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	44.0 (43.3)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	40.8 (39.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 112 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	96 (96)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	91 (90)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	(96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	50.7 (47.8)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 124 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.5 (93.4)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	32.5 (30.0)	36.1(35.5)
Average point score per student	299.2 (277.8)	253.1 (254.5)

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' personal development, including moral and social aspects, and their attitudes and behaviour are good. In the sixth form these are very good. Students' cultural development is satisfactory, but their spiritual development is not adequately nurtured. Attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Almost all students are well behaved, polite and show respect for each other and their teachers.
- ❑ Sixth-formers are actively involved in all aspects of school life and provide excellent role models for younger members of the school.
- ❑ Students in all years have a mature and responsible attitude to their studies.
- ❑ Students are proud of their school but feel their views and concerns are not recognised.

Commentary

7. In response to consistently high expectations almost all students work hard and behave well in lessons and around the school. Notable is the way in which during lunchtimes, with the minimum amount of supervision, students use computers or relax in classrooms in a very responsible manner. Students enjoy participating in numerous extra-curricular activities. These range from lunchtime sporting and musical activities to field trips in geography and history and educational trips to Greece and France. However, a small but significant number of students do not respond well, particularly in lessons. The school's pastoral staff endeavour to minimise the effect of such attitudes on the work of others. However, there are no agreed procedures to help heads of year, form tutors and subject teachers to meet the needs of these young people better through adopting a consistent approach.
8. The school's house and prefect systems provide very good opportunities for students to assume posts of responsibility. Holders of these posts are excellent role models, encouraging younger students to participate fully in school life. The school council and student surveys are vehicles for wide consultation. However, students feel that the views they express through consultation rarely influence decisions.
9. Students' personal development is satisfactory overall though the quality of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is uneven across the curriculum. Some subjects make little planned contribution. The weakest area is students' spiritual development, which is unsatisfactory and actively promoted in relatively few subjects. Students' understanding of moral issues is well developed and good social awareness is most apparent in the very good working relationships seen across the whole school. Students have a good introduction to art forms from different cultures in music and art and design, while religious studies promote a very good understanding and respect for other religions.
10. Overall, relationships between students are good. Students from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated and there are no incidents of racial disharmony. There is some concern that bullying has occurred but students are gaining confidence that the recently adopted procedures are tackling the issue effectively. In the majority of lessons and on an individual basis students have confidence in their teachers and relationships are good. However, they do have concerns in some subjects and about the school's management, where they consider that mutual respect is lacking. They value the support they receive in study and examination preparation groups.
11. The school receives valuable support from the local education authority for a small number of students it has identified as having behavioural difficulties and at risk of exclusion. However, it has not sought support for those students on the special needs register. Responsibility for monitoring their progress lies with heads of year. A clear distinction is not made between the role of heads of year and that of the special needs coordinator so that requirements are not

met. Students at risk of exclusion are not placed on the special needs register as is expected in order that support is provided to help them remain in school.

Sixth form

12. Sixth-form students, particularly those with school or house responsibilities, play key roles in the day-to-day life of the school. They are actively involved in house assemblies, in arranging sporting activities for younger students and in maintaining a calm atmosphere at breaks and lunchtimes. They are keen to help others and are involved in mentoring younger students and leading charity fund-raising. They act as Millennium volunteers. Students have a mature approach to their academic work, working hard in lessons and in their individual studies. The majority interact well with their teachers and value their support. While being very appreciative of the school, students nevertheless have strong views about the ways in which their studies should be enhanced. They would appreciate, for example, wider careers information with more help to choose university courses, and greater recognition of their views and concerns.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.7	School data	0.5
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

13. Attendance is good and has been consistently above the national average. Lessons begin promptly. Procedures for following up unauthorised absence are effective but systems for following up lateness are unsatisfactory. While it is good, sixth-form attendance is lower than in the main school.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – African
Chinese
Any other ethnic group

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
744	35	5
3	0	0
10	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
7	0	0
9	0	0
6	0	0
1	0	0
5	0	0
7	0	0
3	0	0

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

14. The number of fixed-term exclusions is below average for schools of a similar size. Since the previous inspection there were no permanent exclusions until 2002-2003 when the number was high compared with national figures.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory. This applies to the curriculum overall and to links with parents and with other schools. There is good teaching, good learning, a good range of enrichment activities and good links with the local community. Provision for students' assessment, their welfare and guidance and their involvement in school affairs is unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

During the inspection period neighbouring schools kindly loaned staff to cover for staff absence in the high school. The teaching by these colleagues was not graded for inclusion in inspection statistics.

Across the school teaching and learning are good. Assessment is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good overall quality of teaching and learning in lessons is undermined by the weakness in assessment in most subjects and so is not leading to good achievement.
- In the main school, teaching quality is at least good at both stages in seven of the 13 subjects inspected: science, art and design, design and technology, geography, modern languages, music and religious education.
- Students' work over the current academic year shows that teaching in ICT has been unsatisfactory.
- There is very good teaching and learning in physics in the sixth form and in music in Years 10 and 11.
- In the seven sixth-form subjects inspected in detail the quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory in four subjects to very good in one.

Commentary

15. In the 123 lessons observed the quality of teaching was good overall, although within individual subjects and across subjects consistently good quality was not always achieved. In four subjects in the main school the quality varies between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, so that in one of these stages it is only satisfactory. This applies to English, mathematics, citizenship and history.
16. At the last inspection nearly all lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better. In this inspection the picture was much the same. There is good or very good teaching in two-thirds of lessons, and very good teaching in about a fifth, much the same as reported last time. No excellent teaching was seen. The pattern across the three stages is similar, except for the proportion of good and very good teaching. This quality is strongest in Years 7 to 9, declines in Years 10 and 11 and then again in the sixth form.
17. Across the school very good teaching was seen in some of the lessons observed in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, French, music, physical education, religious education and personal, social and health education. These lessons in the main school showed:
- challenging but well-supported tasks in Years 7 to 9, within a secure framework, that elicited enthusiastic responses and gave higher attainers good opportunities to use their skills to the benefit of the group;
 - very skilful development of students' learning skills in Years 7 to 9 through a variety of activities and approaches which made them keen to participate;
 - a challenging task in the lesson with a challenging homework task in Years 7 to 9;

- cracking pace, well-resourced demonstration and lively enthusiastic response in Years 10 and 11 so that much ground was covered in the half-hour;
 - excellent feedback to students in Years 10 and 11 on the strengths and weaknesses in their work, using assessment very effectively to improve standards;
 - a potentially difficult group in Years 10 and 11 managed very well with humour and encouragement, with work planned to stretch everyone and raise self-esteem.
18. Every teacher is provided with brief information about students on the special needs register, but this essential information and their responsibilities as teachers of special needs (true for all teachers) are not given a sufficiently high profile in the management of the school. There are no individual education plans identifying the targets for these students in order that teachers can plan specifically for them. In practice, teachers show a lack of awareness of which students in their classes have special needs and consequently do not take account of their needs when planning lessons. In the small number of lessons taught by members of the pastoral team students' needs are known well and taken account of in the planning.
19. Where teaching was unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11 the main weaknesses were:
- failure to cater for all except the highest attainers in the group, too much time working with a handful of students while others listened passively;
 - no use of the language in the teaching of modern languages, slow pace and lack of focus;
 - after a late start due to assembly over-running, the citizenship topic was dealt with superficially with teaching methods that did not encourage understanding in depth.

Sixth form

20. The overall quality of teaching in the seven subjects inspected in detail in the sixth form varies from satisfactory to very good. In art and design and modern languages the quality is less good than it is in Years 7 to 11. Where very good teaching was seen:
- questioning was used very effectively to identify where any students had difficulty understanding the work and was followed up with very clear explanations;
 - good pace and challenging questions probed students' understanding;
 - good independent thinking was effectively encouraged: students were ready to discuss and challenge each other, and showed strong awareness of various viewpoints.
- Where on occasion teaching was unsatisfactory there was:
- sketchy planning, unclear objectives, lack of structure, no checking of students' understanding and no strategies to ensure that all students participated.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 120 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	28 (23%)	53 (44%)	35 (29%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Assessment

21. The school's assessment policy document gives a free hand to departments to use their own systems for assessment. It refers to a 'Portfolio of Good Marking and Assessment Practice' being in preparation in March 2003 but which has not yet been published. The marking policy gives the briefest guidelines. The requirement that departments should publish these in departmental handbooks and that 'whatever system is used, each teacher should make sure that all pupils understand it' does not appear to have been implemented.

22. The need for greater consistency in marking and grading was a recommendation of the previous inspection. Despite this, with the exception of music, the quality of marking is still variable. The mathematics, geography, history and music departments are alone in giving written advice on how students can improve their standards. As reported in 1998, academic achievement is tracked each term by year committees, but this is a cumbersome process. More effective measures to identify under-achievement advised by the Department for Education and Skills are not used. The mathematics, modern languages and music departments are the only ones using the data from assessments to guide teachers' planning.
23. Apart from the small improvements outlined above, assessment is still at the early stage of development reported at the last inspection. It is still true that insufficient use is made of data to monitor students' progress and assist in planning in order to raise the performance of groups and of individuals.

The curriculum

The breadth of curriculum opportunities is satisfactory overall, with a good range of enrichment activities. Staffing and learning resources are unsatisfactory; accommodation is adequate.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staffing of the curriculum is unsatisfactory with adverse effects on provision from staff absence during the current academic year.
- Statutory requirements for ICT are not met in Years 7 to 9.
- Good opportunities for enrichment activities are well established, with very good participation in sport and the arts.
- Poor provision is made for students with special educational needs.
- Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHE) in Years 10 and 11, and for careers education in the main school, is unsatisfactory, although improvements are in place in PSHE for September 2004.
- The requirements for daily worship and religious education are met.

Commentary

24. At each stage the curriculum provides access to an adequate range of courses. The national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is beginning to be established, mainly through English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and humanities subjects. Not enough attention has been given to developing the curriculum. However, in the context of budgetary constraints and following a review there is a clear plan for development in the next academic year. The timing of the school day will change to reflect the development, discontinuing the short lesson lengths currently in operation. Although statutory requirements are broadly met overall, arrangements for ICT in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.
25. The staffing position is having a negative impact on standards and learning across the school. Staff absence includes long-term absence in several departments, with inadequate arrangements by the school's management to ensure that students' learning is protected. In ICT and design and technology there is inadequate technical support and this has an adverse effect on teaching and learning. This too is an area where improvements are in hand. There is good provision of language assistants in modern foreign languages as well as of instrumental teachers in music, from which students benefit well.
26. Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Planning for this and for citizenship is developing well but the teaching of these programmes is not monitored effectively. Careers education is not providing the guidance students need to make well-informed decisions about their future education and so prepare them for the world of work. However, changes are currently being introduced to bring about improvement. The school meets statutory requirements for collective worship and

religious education: all students follow a short GCSE course in religious studies in Years 10 and 11.

27. The school's provision for the very small number of students with special needs is poor. Its policy and systems have not been modified to take account of the new Code of Practice published in November 2001. The special needs register has not been updated since before the start of the current school year and therefore includes no information on students who have joined the school since then. Students with special needs are not receiving a fair deal in school and their progress is not being reviewed on a regular basis. No specific arrangements are made to support their learning in the absence of learning support assistance. The school has not identified gifted and talented students and makes no provision for them.
28. Students take good advantage of the good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities provided over and above their normal curriculum, particularly in sport and music. Activities also include a wide range of clubs, exchanges with young people in other countries, art classes, charity fund-raising and involvement in community projects. There is too little opportunity for participation in dance. Students' response in activities reflects their mature and responsible attitudes.

Sixth form

29. Students benefit well from the arrangements for communication skills. These are well established in Year 12 and lead to the general studies course in Year 13, taken by many. Religious education is taught through the general studies course and provision is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is unsatisfactory, although there is some good support for students within individual subjects. Arrangements for sixth-form induction are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good systems are in place for monitoring attendance in the main school and the sixth form, although monitoring of lateness is unsatisfactory.
- Students and parents share concerns regarding bullying and the positive steps now being taken by the school are appreciated.
- Support for individuals is unsatisfactory both in the main school and the sixth form; this includes child protection procedures and aspects of careers guidance.
- Arrangements for induction to the sixth form do not prepare students adequately for study at advanced level.
- There are good opportunities, particularly in the sixth form, for students to become involved in the work of the school through taking on positions of responsibility. However, students would like feedback about the views they express and the action taken in response.

Commentary

30. Good attendance is encouraged by efficient systems for chasing up unauthorised absence in the main school and the sixth form. Monitoring of lateness is unsatisfactory: the system for recording arrival, based on trust, does not ensure accurate information.
31. There are meticulous records of first aid and good systems for recording and assessing health and safety risk, although these are not routinely monitored. Risk assessments are not all dated and issues are not tackled with sufficient rigour. Arrangements for child protection are unsatisfactory. The responsible member of staff has yet to receive appropriate training and policy and staff guidelines are outdated.
32. The school's pastoral support systems revolve around heads of lower, middle and upper schools and the respective heads of year so that insufficient use is made of the relationship

between students and their form tutors. In all years students feel under pressure to achieve but not well supported to do so, although individuals who fall behind in their studies are supported on an individual basis. Senior staff acknowledge that there is over-emphasis on the negative rather than on what students do well. Recent improvements, such as the allocation of 'plus points' that can be gained in all aspects of school life, are appreciated by students. Students vary in their questionnaire responses about approaching staff over problems. About half feel that there is someone they could approach. Others do not, feeling that at times there is a lack of sensitivity to individual needs and no-one to confide in.

33. Satisfactory induction procedures for Year 7, including a summer school of fun activities, help students settle quickly into school routines. In discussion younger students emphasised appreciatively the help and care they received from sixth-formers during their first weeks in school. Careers guidance in preparation for making choices of GCSE courses is unsatisfactory. However, the new holder of a recently created post has a clear vision for the development of this area and is beginning to make positive changes. Careers advice is not given in preparation for sixth-form choices or about training opportunities. The school acknowledges that this is an area for improvement. Support from outside agencies is provided for those students with special needs who are judged to be in need of external support. Internal support from the construction, use and review of individual education plans is not provided. The school has not identified those of its students it deems to be gifted and talented and so has no means of monitoring their progress to ensure they reach their potential. It lacks a structured approach to tracking individual progress. Consequently, senior managers cannot evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision in supporting students' academic achievement and personal development.
34. Students play an active role in a number of councils that run in parallel with the school council. For example, the Healthy Schools council worked with catering staff to provide appropriate menus for Muslim students. The school council has perceptively evaluated its own effectiveness, identifying areas in need of streamlining to enable the successor council to be more effective. Students are critical of the senior management's response to the council, feeling that its voice is limited and that feedback from suggestions and opinions is not always forthcoming.

Sixth form

35. Students show considerable dissatisfaction with the school's approach to providing them with support and guidance. Issues relating to the main school apply equally to the sixth form. In particular, guidance about A-level courses and induction into the sixth form are unsatisfactory. While appreciative of the support given over completing university admission forms, students are critical of the school's system of allocating course 'places'. They feel pressured into taking subjects they are good at rather than those that fit their future career choices or aspirations. Visits to universities and higher education fairs are arranged but impartial advice about courses available on leaving school at 16 is limited. Changes are being set in place by the recently appointed careers postholder.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, other schools and colleges are satisfactory overall, and with the community are good. However, the information provided for parents is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good links with the community and support from the parents' association contribute well to students' learning.
- Transfer from Year 6 to Year 7 is managed satisfactorily but arrangements for transfer into the sixth form and onto further or higher education are unsatisfactory.
- Opportunities to seek the views of parents are taken on occasion, but are insufficiently wide-ranging and systematic.

- Communication with parents, including information about their child's progress, varies in quality and helpfulness.

Commentary

36. The school places high value on its ethos of service to the community and of helping young people to mature and develop the skills to become good citizens with a sense of moral responsibility for others. Students regularly fund-raise for local charities, such as for the homeless in Boston. The parents' association gives tireless support: its members are frequent visitors to the school and contribute to practical projects of direct benefit to students' learning through providing equipment such as stage lighting and digital cameras. Transfer arrangements, including a good induction programme for the majority of students, ensure a smooth transition from Year 6. A newly formed partnership with a local college will extend the range of courses offered in Years 10 and 11 in the next academic year.
37. Parents receive a satisfactory amount of helpful written information, some of which is of good quality, such as the termly bulletin. However, the governors' annual report to parents does not give the range of information to which parents are legally entitled and so is unsatisfactory. Opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress with staff are limited. While staff are open to direct approaches from parents, the tone of some written communications does not actively encourage them to do so. Annual reports on students' progress are unsatisfactory. These do not clearly indicate where individual strengths and weaknesses lie, whether the progress made is sufficient, and not all give a clear indication to parents about what their child needs to do to improve in particular subjects. Opportunities for parents to be more closely involved in their children's learning are therefore limited.
38. Although the school seeks the views of parents where required, such as over recent changes to the school uniform, parents do not feel that their views are given due consideration by the school's management. The national Code of Practice requires schools to involve parents of students with special needs in its procedures for support: parents and students should be involved in the construction and review of individual education plans. The school is not doing this, although a target was set of complying with the Code of Practice by autumn 2003. Letters to parents do not seek to build a partnership between them, the students and the school, and this is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

39. The information and advice for students about the range of post-16 opportunities and their appropriateness in relation to career intentions are limited. There are few opportunities for the involvement of members of the local business community in advising students. There is no partnership working with local colleges and other local schools. The new careers coordinator is aware that this is an area for development and keen to give it the attention it requires.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are unsatisfactory. Leadership by the headteacher is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a lack of vision and sense of purpose in the leadership of the school and inattention to the school's central task of promoting good achievement.
- A lack of strategic planning, combined with ineffective self-evaluation, has significantly weakened the running of the school.
- The governing body has not held the school to account for the quality of its work nor ensured that statutory requirements are fully met.
- Governors have a poor understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The school has failed to tackle the three key issues from the previous inspection in 1998 and they persist as weaknesses.

- There is very good leadership in music and in sixth-form physics.

Commentary

40. The school is not operating as a cohesive unit with a sense of urgency that students should achieve well. Among senior and middle managers, as well as among older students, the weakness in leadership has lowered morale. The headteacher has not motivated and inspired staff to develop their practice. Systems in place are not effective in supporting development or in establishing a consistent approach across the school, as shown for example by the continuing weakness in assessment and marking. Pockets of good practice in departments are the result of individual vision and initiative, for example the work on the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 in humanities subjects. There are a number of parallel systems in place for performance management, including an appraisal system for both teaching and support staff and a two-year cycle of departmental reviews. However, the aims and the respective functions of the different systems are unclear. The systems do not converge in a coherent drive for improvement. They achieve little because:
- they are not sharply focused on specific targets with time-scales for improvement;
 - they are not supported by adequate and systematic opportunities for staff development;
 - the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessing through observing lessons and sampling work is unsystematic, irregular, lacking in rigour and rarely evaluative;
 - across departments, the quality of monitoring and self-evaluation is rarely better than satisfactory and in about half the quality is unsatisfactory or worse;
 - some staff are confused not only about the function of their line manager but also of their identity; the school's documented 'family tree' of responsibilities has little influence on day-to-day practice in terms of support or accountability;
 - senior management roles and responsibilities and those of middle managers are poorly defined in terms of school needs, delegation and the exercise of accountability;
 - the strong contribution from the deputy head, a relatively recent appointment, is restricted by this 'confusion' and an overload of tasks, although much of the development work in hand has been stimulated in particular by her, as well as by the assistant headteachers;
 - information collected through the various systems is not collated, reviewed and evaluated to inform the senior team and the governing body about school strengths and weaknesses; this prevents well-considered improvement targets being set for the school;
 - the governing body has not required the school to provide this information for its consideration.
41. There are satisfactory arrangements for the induction of newly qualified staff and those new to the school. Staff who have recently experienced this induction found it helpful. However, the arrangements do not support staff who:
- have recently been promoted;
 - have taken on new responsibilities, for example the librarian;
 - are newly required to teach whole-school subjects such as personal, social and health education and citizenship.
- The school does not respond fast enough to support staff and students who find themselves in critical situations, for example in situations which are a consequence of staff absence, as in ICT and special needs, or where curriculum leadership and management are insecure, for example in art and design.
42. Arrangements for the continuing professional development of staff, CPD, are unsatisfactory overall. The budget for this has been inadequate in the past and applied unsystematically. Minutes of the personnel subcommittee of the governing body repeatedly indicate that the funding allocation is used up well before the end of the year. This is a symptom of haphazard planning and administration and has led to a considerable backlog of training need. The lack of a coherent system for CPD to support school improvement undermines the potential effectiveness of staff performance management and induction. A new and potentially better scheme has been devised but has not yet commenced. The school has no register of its own

good practice and is wasting opportunities for the sharing of good practice across subjects and courses to stimulate improvement. It makes no contribution to initial teacher training. The school's application for Investors in People status was unsuccessful.

43. Much useful data on students' assessments is received from primary schools, duly processed and passed to subject departments. These school record sheets, with termly assessments and statistically generated targets, provide well for tracking individual progress. Most are maintained manually until new software is up and running. Some departments keep their own central record, but this is not universal and not expected. In English, mathematics and science students are kept aware of their National Curriculum and GCSE levels, but otherwise only geography and music do this across both stages. This shortcoming was criticised in the 1998 inspection. Belatedly, level descriptors were published earlier in the current term for students' information. It is intended to include these levels in students' annual reports in Years 7 and 8 from September 2004 in addition to the mandatory reported levels for Year 9. Target-setting is used by all departments except art and design and physical education. Some departments rely on statistically generated targets, others modify these by teachers' assessments or through negotiation with students.
44. Leadership of the school's work with students with special needs is poor and lacks commitment to ensuring they achieve well. This small but important area of the school's work does not have a sufficiently high profile. Neither the policy nor the current practice meets the requirements of the Code of Practice; neither is formally monitored. Documentation shows that senior managers are aware of the deficiencies but have not taken action to rectify the situation nor made alternative arrangements during the long-term absence of the special needs coordinator.
45. The school's expenditure per student in 2002-2003 was low compared with the national average figure for secondary schools. Consequences of a fall in funding were the need to make staff redundancies and to carry forward a deficit with a recovery programme agreed with the local education authority. A recent financial audit reported robust systems but criticised the school's failure to keep to the agreed programme. Figures at the end of the current financial year show that this is still the case with an increase in the deficit to be carried forward. This despite the ongoing concern and clear direction by the chair of governors and the finance committee that action should be taken to put matters to rights. The action agreed with governors in relation to modern foreign languages was not taken by the school. Both in the main school and in the sixth form the income and expenditure on students broadly balances. In general, students across the school benefit equally from its strengths and are equally affected by its weaknesses.

Financial information for the whole school

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2 160 320	Balance brought forward from previous year 01-02	-30 440
Total expenditure	2 196 577	Balance carried forward to the next 03-04	-36 257
Expenditure per student	2 795		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards are being sustained.
- New ideas and teaching strategies are being introduced which are improving students' learning.
- Students' good behaviour and positive attitudes support their learning.
- There is insufficient monitoring of students' progress to analyse how well students are performing against expectations.
- Teachers have too few opportunities to contribute to curriculum development and the sharing of good practice which limits the progress of the department.

Commentary

46. GCSE results in 2003 in English and English literature were well above the national average. However, students' relative performance against their other subjects was significantly worse than the national picture. In the 2003 Year 9 tests, results overall were well above average. However, results gained by higher attainers were well below those in similar schools when compared with students' standards on entry to Year 7. Results in 2003 did not rise in line with the national average.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both satisfactory</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both unsatisfactory</i>

47. Students enter the school with well above average literacy skills. By Year 9, most are making satisfactory progress and in lessons where teaching is good they enjoy challenging literature such as 'Macbeth'. Students' writing ranges from satisfactory to very good, with the most capable producing extended writing for a range of purposes and readers. Most students are confident speakers. They are keen to answer questions and present their work to others although too many lessons are dominated by teacher talk. By Year 11, they have a good knowledge of the books they are studying for GCSE. They have a good grasp of the plot and characters of 'Pride and Prejudice' and can analyse a poem such as 'To his Coy Mistress' to understand how it achieves its effects. The students are effectively encouraged to draft and redraft their work in order to improve their standards of writing. This contributes to the good results in English literature. Teachers ensure that students support their arguments with evidence and quotations from the text. Classes are taught in all-ability groups with no identification of those who are gifted and talented or have special needs. Teachers do not plan different work in order to maximise the achievement of these groups. The small number of students from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers.
48. Teaching shows that:
- when good use is made of paired and group work it successfully encourages independent learning;
 - question and answer sessions led by the teacher are a feature of most lessons but do not engage a significant minority of students;
 - teachers have good knowledge of syllabus requirements and prepare students well for examinations;

- relationships between teachers and students are good; teachers support students well, giving them the confidence to succeed;
- lesson objectives are not shared or reviewed with students, so the opportunity to judge how well they have learned is lost;
- infrequent marking of work which does not give specific enough advice on how to improve further limits the progress that students make;
- the lack of specific planning to meet the needs of lower or higher attainers results in them making only satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

49. There is a well-qualified team of staff, although staff absence and changes of teacher have affected continuity, to the detriment of the progress of a significant minority of students. Students have few opportunities to use ICT. There is no specialist drama teaching which results in a limited range of teaching and learning styles. Informal sharing of good practice has resulted in some use of varied and innovative approaches, but this is not supported by any formal departmental systems. Monitoring of the department's work is unsatisfactory. The use of data from assessment is insufficiently refined to enable staff to track individual progress effectively. The department lacks rigorous self-evaluation systems and has not been required to produce a detailed development plan. There is no clear vision for the development of the subject and no drive for improvement. Since the last inspection improvement is unsatisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. Students' literacy skills are generally high and do not inhibit their access to any curriculum areas. The school has a literacy policy which is being implemented to some degree in all subjects except ICT, but there are no whole-school systems to monitor its effectiveness. There is an effective focus on literacy skills in design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. In these subject areas a wide range of strategies is used which have contributed to the production of good written work by the students.

Modern foreign languages

All students begin French in Year 7 and add Spanish in Year 8. In previous years half began Spanish and half German in Year 8. All continue with French in Years 10 and 11 and can choose to study their second language to GCSE and advanced level. Due to budgetary constraints, the teaching of German will be discontinued in Years 8 and 9 and at GCSE in the next academic year. The arrangements for this have not been well managed with the result that there are insufficient specialist teachers for all classes.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching with a very sharp focus on how to improve is mostly leading to very high standards.
- Good leadership and management have created a team approach to improving teaching and learning which is raising standards.
- Standards in Year 9 are adversely affected by the lack of specialist teachers to teach all classes.

Commentary

51. GCSE results in 2003 were very high in all three languages. This has been the case in recent years. Students gain significantly better results in languages than in their other subjects. Standards have been lower in speaking than in the other skills examined but the department has effective strategies to improve them. In 2003, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were significantly above those reported nationally although no students attained the higher levels 7 or 8. These assessments have shown a rising trend keeping pace with the improvement nationally.

Achievement	good
Standards	well above average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership and management	both good

52. Students enter the school with levels of general attainment above the national expectation. The very good standards in the work seen show they have achieved well. In Year 9, higher attainers are now reaching level 7, indicating that teachers' assessments in the current academic year are likely to show improvement from 2003. This is a result of good teaching and changes in the planning of the curriculum. In Year 11, teaching for students of all levels of attainment is well focused on the requirements of the examination and on how students can raise their grades. Throughout the school most teaching caters equally well for the needs of all students to ensure that they all reach their potential. Where the teacher understands the learning difficulties of students with special needs, these students achieve well because the planning takes good account of their needs. However, the school's arrangements do not ensure that teachers are fully aware of students' learning difficulties and how best to provide for them. Since the school has not identified gifted and talented students it is not possible to comment on their achievement. Students from minority ethnic groups are very well integrated into lessons and achieve as well as their peers.
53. The main strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- there is almost always very thorough planning of a variety and sequence of activities which are conducted at a brisk pace; these gain and keep students' interest, provide a high level of challenge and motivate them to work hard and learn well;
 - on occasions when teaching is unsatisfactory a small number of higher attainers receive too much of the teacher's attention and the lesson proceeds at a pace suited to them. Consequently, there is insufficient practice of new vocabulary and language structures to ensure that all students in the group learn well;
 - teachers' assessment of students' work is usually good, often very good; this helps students to be aware of how well they are doing and how to make improvements;
 - there are some inconsistencies in marking; in spite of the focus given by the leadership of the department, not all teachers yet give students helpful advice on how to overcome problems, so not all do as well as they can;
 - classroom management is very good; isolated incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour are very well dealt with and do not interrupt learning.

Leadership and management

54. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Only within the previous year has the school established an overall head of modern languages which effectively brings the different languages together to share strengths and tackle weaknesses. The new leadership of the department is very sharply focused on getting the best for all students and raising attainment. Good planning for development is based on thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses. The strategy of involving all teachers in this analysis has helped to build an effective team with a shared commitment to improvement. The department is working very hard to minimise the problems for students' learning which have resulted from the decision to discontinue teaching German. However, the structure of the timetable means that a specialist teacher cannot teach all the German lessons. This is having a negative effect on students' attainment. The visits to France and French exchange give those who take part valuable opportunities to extend their knowledge and practise their language skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership and management of the department provide a secure base for future improvement.
- Students' good behaviour, hard work and concentration skills ensure that they achieve satisfactorily.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables higher attainers to achieve well.
- The range of teaching styles is too narrow to engage less capable learners successfully.
- There is insufficient marking of work to inform students about what they need to do to improve, which limits their achievement.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in some areas of the mathematics curriculum which limits students' progress.

Commentary

55. In 2003, GCSE results were well above the national average. The trend in GCSE results has matched the national improvement. Year 9 test results in 2003 were well above the national average, although fewer students attained the highest levels compared with selective schools. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved at the same rate as results nationally.

Achievement	satisfactory
Standards	well above average
Teaching and learning	satisfactory in Years 7 to 9
	good in Years 10 and 11
Leadership and management	both good

56. Students' work shows satisfactory achievement from their above average standards when they join Year 7. Use of additional support materials in Year 9 is improving the achievement of lower attainers. Additional mathematics classes in Year 11 are helping the most capable students to attain high standards in their work. Students from ethnic minorities achieve as well as other students. No students with special needs were in the classes seen. In the best lessons there is good achievement because of the range of teaching methods and the close monitoring of students' progress. Where teaching is only satisfactory, teachers do not plan sufficiently for different levels of need and the range of teaching styles is limited to teachers' explanations and written exercises. In such lessons some lower attainers struggle to concentrate and this limits their achievement over time. Behaviour in lessons is very good and this contributes significantly to students' achievement.

57. The main strengths and weaknesses of the teaching are:

- teachers have good subject knowledge which helps higher attaining students achieve well;
- examination work is well planned which helps pupils achieve good grades at GCSE;
- in many lessons there is too limited a range of activities to consolidate students' learning, which has an adverse effect on the progress of lower attainers in particular;
- teachers do not give sufficient attention to identifying the strengths and weaknesses in students' work during lessons which limits their progress;
- work is not marked carefully enough to give students guidance as to how they can improve and this limits their progress.

Through the head of department's involvement in national initiatives innovative teaching methods are being introduced which are helping students to do well.

Leadership and management

58. The head of department leads by example through her own teaching skills, her knowledge of current developments in teaching and learning and a good development plan. Target-setting processes for mathematics have improved so that students now have a better understanding

of the standard of their work. Staff work well together to plan and develop the curriculum so that it covers all areas of learning. Teachers are well supported, particularly where there is a contribution by non-specialists, and this is achieving consistent quality in lessons. However, there is insufficient monitoring of lessons to identify weaknesses and share good practice in order to improve the quality of teaching. There is limited guidance from senior managers on how this could be achieved. Since the last inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement overall. This applies to the quality of provision and students' achievement. However, access to ICT is still insufficient to support curriculum requirements, which restricts the range of activities necessary for students to achieve well in all areas of the subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. Students' application of mathematical skills in other curriculum areas is satisfactory. All departments have identified the mathematical knowledge that students need in each year group for their subject, although this is not yet incorporated into all schemes of work.

SCIENCE

Science is taught as three separate disciplines in all years. In Years 10 and 11, 24 students are selected for the three separate sciences, the remainder take the dual award course. All these groups are of mixed attainment. The single award course has been revived for students less committed to the subject.

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students generally achieve well because teachers have high expectations and are committed to improvement.
- High quality relationships facilitate good learning so that results are improving by Year 9 and by Year 11.
- Good assessment records facilitate teachers' setting of targets for students and the monitoring of their progress.
- The standard of routine marking and the frequency of grading are unsatisfactory.
- Some outdated methods of teaching lead to loss of interest and underachievement.
- Students with special needs and the gifted and talented are not catered for.

Commentary

60. Overall the 2003 GCSE results were above the national average for all schools. For A* - G grades, separate science results were above the national average but dual award results were slightly below. Results have been improving annually. The 2003 Years 9 tests show continuing improvement, keeping pace with the national rate.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good in Years 7 to 9</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>satisfactory in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>above average by Year 9 and Year 11</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>
	<i>both satisfactory</i>

61. On entry to the school, students' attainment is above the national average standard. Students make steady progress in lessons, albeit at different rates, so that by Year 9 they have a firm knowledge of basic principles. They learn to integrate what they have studied in the three science disciplines. By Year 11, students' understanding of theory is deeper and their experimental skills have improved: their observations are made in greater detail and their measurements are more accurate. They write simple formulae equations competently. Investigational skills begun at the end of Year 9 are well developed and examination scripts show that students plan, measure and record accurately. Students' predictions are confirmed

or corrected on the basis of the evidence gathered and their evaluation is perceptive. In this area of work advice on how to improve has clearly been absorbed and has raised standards. The standard of students' reports is high: most are word-processed and presented well. Most students add additional material from outside sources to enhance their notebooks. Oral, practical and written work is of a good standard in all groups. Students from minority ethnic groups are totally integrated and their attainment and progress match those of their classmates in all years. Students with special needs are not identified and there is no provision for them.

62. The main strengths and weaknesses of teaching are:
- good resourcing and planning, with clear tasks and time-limits, allow much ground to be covered in a double lesson, thus maintaining a good pace;
 - higher attainers who work faster than their classmates are not challenged with more difficult work; they merely receive more of the same and so under-achieve;
 - tasks requiring note-copying and answering questions on information from textbooks engender boredom and disenchantment - as students emphasised in discussion;
 - notebooks are inspected regularly as indicated by ticks, but grading is infrequent and there is no comment on how to improve. Students are therefore unsure whether their notes are accurate for revision and this limits their ability to raise their standards;
 - there is still insufficient routine use of ICT techniques in lessons, although National Curriculum requirements are met.

Leadership and management

63. There is no overall head of science, the three subject leaders operating as a team instead. They share a commitment to high standards and improvement of results. However, too much of their time is spent triplicating the tasks that would fall to a head of subject, which is inefficient. No single voice represents the views of the department as a whole and this is to their disadvantage. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is similarly fragmented and this hampers the raising of standards. The lack of close monitoring of marking and consequent lack of advice to students, together with dated teaching methods, are further factors restricting students' achievement. Resources are good and used effectively. Laboratories, although insufficient in number, are bright and spacious working areas with good displays. Thus, although the leadership of the three disciplines is satisfactory, the overall management of science is not as effective as it could be. All three subject areas are well served by dedicated technicians who provide an admirable level of support to underpin the good teaching. Examination results have risen as the result of higher quality teaching and good assessment records, but the previous key issue concerning marking and grading has not been sufficiently addressed. Improvement can therefore only be judged as satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Both specialist teachers of ICT were absent during the inspection period. Judgements are based on the scrutiny of work and discussions with students and senior staff. Lessons in Years 8, 10 and 11 were observed, overseen by staff from neighbouring schools who helped out during the inspection.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve good standards because their good attitudes and motivation lead to satisfactory, sometimes good, learning, despite unsatisfactory teaching.
- The use of assessment is unsatisfactory and fails to ensure that students achieve as well as they could.
- Unsatisfactory leadership and management are demonstrated by the failure to identify in development planning the key issues for improvement.
- The school's management of ICT across all subjects is poor, with no arrangements for the planning or monitoring of provision.

- The full programme of study does not meet statutory requirements for the use of data, e-mail, control tasks and the wider uses of ICT.

Commentary

64. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average for the short GCSE course in ICT. Teachers' Year 9 assessments in 2003 were well above those reported nationally, although the work seen suggests that these were over-generous.

Achievement	unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9
	satisfactory in Years 10 and 11
Standards	above average by Year 9 and Year 11
Teaching	unsatisfactory
Learning	satisfactory
Leadership and management	both unsatisfactory

65. On entry to Year 7 students' attainment in the subject is average. The standard of work in Years 7 to 9 does not reflect the capability of students: they under-achieve. Standards in the work seen in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate achievement that, although better, is only satisfactory. Students are not achieving their potential because of poor support and guidance. Evidence from the inspection of students' work shows that this is because of unsatisfactory teaching. The review of work did not include any from the small number of students from minority ethnic groups or those with special needs.
66. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory because:
- there is a lack of support and guidance to enable students to improve their work;
 - the use of assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not provide students with a clear ongoing understanding of how well they are doing;
 - in Years 10 and 11, assessment follows GCSE requirements but provides too little information for students about how to make improvements.
- However, students' learning is satisfactory or better in lessons because of their good attitude, ability and motivation.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership of the department shows a lack of vision and key issues for development are not being identified. There are a number of weaknesses in departmental management which senior staff have failed to tackle. Although there are procedures for managers to monitor and evaluate the performance of the department, these have failed to improve provision. Policies for the department are too general and do not cover the specific aspects of the management of ICT. Records of the information from assessments are unsatisfactory and the information is not shared with students or used to assist teachers in their planning. The accommodation for teaching ICT is unsatisfactory, with small rooms in which it is difficult to supervise students adequately. Resources for teaching and learning are unsatisfactory:
- there are insufficient computer facilities to ensure good access for students;
 - the stock of computers is becoming dated and many cannot be used with new software programs.
 - display is not used as a resource for teaching and learning.
- There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

68. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. An audit of whole school provision for ICT has not been undertaken to identify resource and training needs. There is no school planning for ICT across all subjects and courses. ICT is used satisfactorily in geography, history, religious education and music, but this is mainly for research on topics using the Internet. Subject areas do not contribute to the assessment of ICT capability. Planning is not taking into account the long-term development of ICT for teaching and learning across the school.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good procedures for assessment in Years 7 to 9 are leading to good achievement, but marking does not support this process well enough.
- The very high GCSE results are maintained because of teachers' very good subject knowledge and good preparation for examinations.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough to ensure that the needs of the highest and lowest attainers are met.

Commentary

69. Maintaining the subject's very good performance since the last inspection, GCSE results in 2003 were well above national averages. Teachers' Year 9 assessments in 2003 show students reaching standards above those expected for students of a similar age. These standards are reflected in the work seen.

Achievement	good
Standards	well above average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership	good
Management	satisfactory

70. On entry students' geographical knowledge and skills are below national expectations but they quickly make gains in both and demonstrate good achievement over Years 7 to 9. By Year 9 all students, including those from minority ethnic groups, show their good knowledge of volcanoes and earthquakes in projects that are very well researched and often skilfully presented using ICT. Building on this good learning, students in Years 10 and 11 make consistently good gains in their awareness of how people's lives in different parts of the world are shaped by the balance of natural and human factors. Their good research skills are very well used in coursework on Lincoln. However, this work reveals a relative weakness in their ability to interpret their findings in sufficient depth. There was no evidence to suggest that students with special needs and those from minority ethnic groups were not achieving as well as their peers, although these students were not identified by the school in order to check on their progress.

71. In all but a very small minority of lessons, the work provides an appropriate level of challenge for most students and they respond well. Teaching strengths making a significant contribution to students' achievement:

- teachers' good organisation and planning almost always result in lessons which engage students' initial attention and contain a variety of tasks that promote continuous learning;
- good use is made of homework to consolidate students' understanding and provide opportunities for individual research;
- in Years 7 to 9 assessment procedures encourage students effectively to aim high; success criteria for each assignment provide them with a very good knowledge of National Curriculum levels to which teachers refer in the marking.

Areas for improvement:

- there are insufficient materials specifically prepared for lower attaining students which inhibits their achievement;
- teachers' comments in the marking do not refer to the success criteria and the use of a quite separate grading system at the same time is confusing for students and parents;
- the very good assessment procedures established in Years 7 to 9 are not extended to Years 10 and 11.

Leadership and management

72. Good leadership by the head of department provides a clear vision for the development of the subject. He is a very good role model for other teachers who feel well supported in their work. Examination results are used well both to evaluate and to improve performance. Some progress has been made in the monitoring of teaching and learning, but there has been insufficient focus on evaluating the effect of teaching on the learning of higher and lower attainers. Assessment procedures, identified as a weakness in the last inspection, are now a developing strength and the department is helping to develop the use of assessment procedures to improve students' attainment.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do well in Years 10 and 11 because of the good quality of teaching.
- Positive attitudes to work help students to learn well.
- When teachers' expectations are not high enough, higher attainers in Years 7 to 9 are not always challenged to think analytically.
- The subject makes a good contribution to developing students' awareness of their responsibilities as citizens.
- Good leadership has brought positive improvements, but teaching and learning are not monitored closely enough to ensure consistency of good practice.
- As assessment procedures are undeveloped, data are not used to set clear targets for students on how to improve and to monitor their progress.

Commentary

73. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average for all schools with all students attaining A*-C grades. They did better in history than in nearly all their other GCSE subjects. This continues a trend of improvement since the last inspection.

Achievement	good
Standards	above average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership	good
Management	satisfactory

74. Students enter the school with history and literacy skills that are above national expectations. Students use their good literacy skills well to select and record evidence from different sources. They write well in different styles for a range of purposes, such as empathetic letters from slaves on plantations by Year 9 students. Satisfactory skills of numeracy and ICT support their studies. Higher attainers have very good recall of key facts and are learning to evaluate sources. However, when the teachers' expectations are too low, they are not always challenged effectively to think independently. Skills of interpreting evidence and prioritising causes and effects are also undeveloped. As students with special needs, those who are gifted and talented and those for whom English is a second language are not identified, their progress cannot be measured. Standards in Year 11 reflect recent GCSE results and students achieve well. The high standard of coursework on the First World War shows well-developed skills of research and writing. Higher attainers have good skills in analysing sources for reliability and usefulness, although they are undeveloped in lower attaining students.
75. The main strengths and weaknesses of the teaching are:
- teachers use their good knowledge to prepare students well for examinations;
 - in many lessons there is a good range of activities and improved resources that sustains students' interest;

- relationships are good and teachers manage and support students well so that effective learning is encouraged;
- in a small minority of lessons, higher attainers in Years 7 to 9 are not always sufficiently challenged when tasks are too mundane;
- marking of work is not done consistently well so that a minority of students do not know how they can improve, especially in Years 7 to 9.

As a result of these features, students make better progress in Years 10 and 11 than in earlier years. Overall, students of all ages respond well to the teaching and their attitudes and behaviour are good. This is promoted by the successful encouragement of group and class discussions which also develop the students' oral skills.

Leadership and management

76. The subject leader is committed to helping students achieve well and provides a good example through his own challenging teaching. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have been raised through good teaching. The use of computers has improved. Students' experiences are enriched by outside visits. Discussion of moral, social and political issues raises their awareness of their roles as young citizens. However, assessment procedures are unsatisfactory: assessment tasks do not focus sufficiently on history skills and data are not used to guide students with clear targets on how to improve. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students consistently achieve high standards at GCSE.
- The department is developing teaching effectively through the national strategy for Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching caters well for most students' high academic ability but some tasks are not adapted to meet the needs of all.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 uses levels inaccurately and marking does not use criteria precisely to identify how students can improve.

Commentary

77. Results at GCSE are outstanding: all students have achieved grades A*-C in the short course for the past three years. In 2002 most gained A* or A and in 2003 just over half did so.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory by Year 9 good by Year 11</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average by Year 9 well above average by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

78. Standards are above average on entry. They remain so by Year 9, where students show good knowledge and understanding of rituals marking important stages in the lives of Christians, Jews and Muslims and can make comparisons between them. They discuss religious ideas intelligently and express their own values and beliefs in a mature way. Many students are fluent writers, competent in a range of styles from notes to imaginative and reflective writing. Higher attainers excel at project work and most students successfully carry out their own research. Lower attainers do not produce the same amount of detail and are confused by the abstract thinking required on occasion. The new system of assessing students' levels of attainment using levels is not yet having any significant effect on raising achievement.

79. The work in Years 10 and 11 is extremely thorough and well presented. Year 11 students research topics well, develop effective examination technique and balance arguments critically on both sides of controversial issues. Most have a very good understanding of religious teachings on moral and social issues, use technical terms appropriately and evaluate different views intelligently. Differences in achievement between higher and lower attainers are mainly the result of students' attitudes to the subject rather than any lack of ability to perform at the highest level. Students from minority ethnic groups do as well as the rest.
80. The main features of the teaching are:
- very good subject knowledge by specialists, experienced at preparing students for examinations;
 - high academic challenge but with tasks not always suitably adapted for lower attainers;
 - promotion of students' skills in independent learning through well-structured investigations and projects;
 - good working relationships fostered through group work which encourage students of different faiths to share their knowledge and experience;
 - a start has been made at assessing work by specific criteria but teachers' comments and targets do not explain clearly to students what they should do to achieve higher levels;
 - ICT is used well for research in Years 10 and 11 but opportunities for class use are too limited in Years 7 to 9.

Leadership and management

81. Efficient management and good leadership have maintained high standards since the previous inspection. Departmental monitoring and reviewing of its work have sustained satisfactory, planned improvement. Teachers have adopted ideas from the national strategy for Years 7 to 9. They have introduced levels of attainment in the subject, although these are not yet used accurately and the effect on students' achievement has not fully registered yet. The department is beginning to use value-added data to monitor its performance and set targets. Enrichment of the curriculum through visits and visitors has declined. The personal development of students remains a strong feature, valuing the contribution made by students of different faiths and encouraging respect for others' views. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory: standards have been maintained, work is assessed against levels, but extra-curricular activities have declined.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching develops students' understanding of what is expected if they are to reach high standards.
- High quality Year 11 coursework is achieved as a result of good staff guidance and students' very good attitudes to their work.
- There is insufficient collaborative planning by staff to ensure a coherent experience throughout the modular course for Years 7 to 9.
- Marking is inconsistent and does not always give detailed feedback to students about how to improve their work.
- Unsatisfactory provision for ICT and limited coverage of systems and control aspects of the National Curriculum restrict the variety of design and technology activities and reduce the challenge of work for students.

Commentary

82. In 2003 the GCSE results were well above average. Standards were maintained from previous years. Graphic products results improved, from unusually low grades in 2002. Year 9 teacher assessments were well above the average reported nationally in 2003 and continue an improving trend over the past three years with students reaching the highest levels.

Achievement	satisfactory in Years 7 to 9
Standards	good in Years 10 and 11
Teaching and learning	above average by Year 9 and by Year 11
Leadership and management	both good
	both satisfactory

83. Standards on entry are above national expectations. By the end of Year 9 students have had a variety of experiences in designing and making functional products, using different materials. However, there is insufficient use of ICT and students are not taught about systems and control. This limits the type of products that they make and reduces the level of challenge in the work. Students understand and analyse design briefs well and are beginning to develop research skills. These skills, along with good knowledge of the properties of materials, particularly in food and textiles, support the generation of their design ideas. Students' evaluative writing is both thorough and analytical. In Years 10 and 11 students show good independent learning skills. Progress is evident in the range and quality of research that informs students' design decisions. Higher attainers produce very good quality drawings and sketches to communicate more mature design concepts. However, some coursework by lower attainers who are less confident in this area shows that they have not applied their knowledge to designing. There is adequate development of knowledge about industrial processes in all year groups but few opportunities to make products in quantity. In the small number of practical lessons observed products were well made with good levels of skill and accuracy. Students from minority ethnic groups achieve well in design and technology and are represented among the highest attainers. Students with special needs make satisfactory progress but do not receive sufficient guidance from teachers about what they need to do to improve.

84. Strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- teachers are knowledgeable and well organised and individual lessons are planned thoroughly;
 - learning objectives are not clear enough or used sufficiently to ensure that teachers and students understand what progress in learning has been made;
 - the course for Years 7 to 9 is not planned effectively to ensure that learning is progressive and that all modules are sufficiently challenging for all students;
 - good teaching materials offer guidance to students about course requirements, help to structure their learning and support the development of good literacy skills;
 - work is marked regularly in Years 7 to 9, although the variable quality of teachers' comments means that students are not always aware of how well they are doing and how they can improve;
 - students in Years 10 and 11 receive helpful feedback which they use effectively to improve the quality of their coursework.

The behaviour and attitudes of students are good. However, in Years 7 to 9 teachers' introductions and teaching methods do not always encourage active participation.

Leadership and management

85. A sense of purpose and commitment is evident in the department as well as efficient organisation. There is good capacity to develop the leadership but a current lack of clear vision and sense of direction. Departmental evaluation has begun and priorities identified in planning. However, the school's expectations for the use of data on students' performance in the subject are not clear and data are not used routinely to evaluate and improve the department's work. There are no arrangements to ensure that the experienced staff, most of whom hold senior posts, have time for planning as a team. Resources are insufficient for ICT and for the

development of the systems and control aspects of the National Curriculum, a weakness reported at the last inspection. The lack of both has a limiting effect on students' achievement. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. While standards remain above average, there is insufficient progress in the quality of teacher assessment and students' use of ICT and systems and control remains underdeveloped.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Poor leadership and management of the department result in inefficient practices and a lack of clear guidance for students.
- Students' very positive attitudes and good relationships make the best of a difficult situation.
- Inadequate resources restrict students' knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Unsatisfactory assessment procedures do not fully inform students of their progress.

Commentary

86. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average for A* to C grades. In comparison with their other GCSE subjects, however, students' attainment was more than half a grade lower than expectations. Teachers' Year 9 assessments in 2003 are unreliable due to inaccurate use of the grading criteria.

**Achievement
Standards**

**unsatisfactory
average by Year 9
average by Year 11**

Teaching and learning

**good in Years 7 to 9
good in Years 10 and 11**

Leadership and management

both poor

87. Standards of attainment are at the national expectation on entry in Year 7. Although they remain at the national average by the end of Year 9, this represents lower achievement than would be expected of students with this range of ability. In Years 7 to 9 students carry out a chronological survey of art history, largely through homework, but this is unrelated to their practical work. Good opportunities are therefore missed to reinforce learning and develop understanding. By the end of Year 11 standards in the work seen are at the national average which again represents lower achievement than would be expected. Standards in practical work reflect significant improvement since Year 9 with occasional examples of very good observational drawing. However, students' knowledge and understanding of art and artists are weak. Drawings and paintings are neatly worked although images are often repeated and poorly annotated. Students with special needs are not identified: their needs are not addressed and their achievement is unsatisfactory. The performance of students from minority ethnic groups is very similar to that of their peers.
88. At the time of the inspection the head of department was absent and the remaining, relatively new teacher was in charge, receiving advice and guidance from external advisers. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was good but evidence from folders and sketchbooks showed the quality to be unsatisfactory over time.
89. The significant features of teaching are as follows:
- good relationships between students and with teachers in lessons lead to very positive attitudes and a willingness to learn;

- lessons seen were well prepared with good demonstrations, especially of printmaking, that successfully engaged students' interest and effort;
- in Years 7 to 9 students do not see progression and purpose in the projects because the planning lacks a clear structure;
- in Years 10 and 11 students work hard but do not receive sufficient guidance to focus their efforts which leads to repetition and inefficient working practice;
- students with special needs and those with a talent for the subject are not identified and so do not receive appropriately challenging work to raise their achievement;
- assessment criteria are not shared with students so they do not know how to improve although most are given a current or predicted grade;
- there are not enough resources to support an experimental approach to materials and insufficient art books for research.

Leadership and management

90. Poor leadership and management have resulted in inefficient use of time, resources and staff, and consequently in unsatisfactory achievement by the students. Weaknesses in departmental documentation and failure to establish good working relationships have led to inconsistent and inefficient teaching. There is inadequate departmental support and guidance for new staff. Assessment procedures are not rigorous enough to track students' performance. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Issues raised then about assessment, achievement and resources remain unresolved.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good curriculum leadership promotes a strong subject focus, high standards and positive student commitment and enjoyment.
- Good, often very good, teaching and learning ensures students' good achievement.
- Very good enrichment, which involves an unusually high numbers of students, makes an important contribution to the life and reputation of the school.
- Inadequate computer resources prevent students' access to ICT skills in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

91. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average in comparison with all maintained schools. The proportion of students obtaining A*, A and B grades was slightly better than the school average. Results are consistent from year to year. Teachers' Year 9 assessments in 2003 were above the national average.

Achievement Standards	good above average by Year 9 well above average by Year 11
Teaching and learning	good in Years 7 to 9 very good in Years 10 and 11
Leadership Management	very good good

92. Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is as expected nationally. Because they come from a particularly high number of primary schools their musical experiences vary widely. Teachers' expectations early in Year 7 are too cautious. The high number of students who play a musical instrument are not fully stretched by the teaching while other students gain basic skills and understanding. Adaptable tasks and individual help give good support to the very small numbers of students who experience minor difficulties. Otherwise, throughout Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 students of different levels of attainment and from minority ethnic groups achieve consistently well. This is evident in their performing and composing skills, their

knowledge and understanding, and their use of key words and technical language. Although most have fluent computer skills, inadequate ICT resources mean that students in Years 7 to 9 cannot develop any facility in music programs. Similarly, students in Years 10 and 11 are severely restricted, especially when composing.

93. Students' good and often very good learning is promoted by teaching which:
- provides a variety of interesting assignments which develop and reinforce whole class, group and individual performing, composing and appraising;
 - challenges and stimulates them to work hard to achieve high standards while supporting them through well-designed tasks and helpful resources;
 - develops very good independence, particularly in Years 10 and 11;
 - makes a particularly strong contribution to their personal development through good teamwork, sharing, cultural awareness, valuing and appreciating each other's efforts.

In all year groups students have good opportunities to develop analytical listening and to practise the evaluation of their own and others' work. Teachers' feedback is helpful and encouraging. The successful target-based assessment scheme in Years 10 and 11 has recently been extended to Years 7 and 8 and will become consistent throughout the subject by the end of the current school year. Students are clear about their levels of attainment and what they must do to improve them.

94. The good classroom curriculum is enhanced by very good enrichment opportunities. These include well-taught instrumental lessons, expertly coached performance ensembles, competitions and contact with professional musicians. Non-instrumentalists are served well by choral activities. Students' high levels of participation, commitment and enjoyment result in high standards which affect positively the life and reputation of the school.

Leadership and management

95. Leadership is dynamic and management is efficient and energetic. High aspirations are realised through very good teamwork, unity of purpose and practice. Although subject self-evaluation is at an early stage, the management of change and of strategic development is effective. As a result, improvement since the previous inspection is good, especially in the adoption of better teaching and learning strategies and assessment for students in Years 7 to 9. Standards of attainment, achievement and GCSE results are all maintained.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' performance is not assessed against National Curriculum levels as required.
- Enthusiastic teaching staff organise extensive out-of-hours learning and sporting activities.
- An over-emphasis on games, athletics and fitness limits students' participation in aesthetic activities.
- The timetabling for physical education inhibits students' opportunities.
- Students readily accept new and varied challenges and achievement is highest when they are set difficult tasks.
- Facilities for physical education are good although school timetabling does not make the best use of them.

Commentary

96. An examination course is not offered in Years 10 and 11.

Achievement

***good in Years 7 to 9
satisfactory in Years 10 and 11***

Standards

***above average by Year 9
average by Year 11***

Teaching

satisfactory

Learning

**good in Years 7 to 9
satisfactory in Years 10 and 11
both satisfactory**

Leadership and management

97. Students' standards when they join Year 7 meet the national criteria for their age. Students achieve well in games, athletics and gymnastics in Years 7 to 9, but there are no dance activities within the curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, while achievement is satisfactory overall, students excel in athletic pursuits and games. Their skills in invasion games are strong, but the lack of aesthetic activities is a weakness in their development. All students are included within the framework of lessons, but there is no specific planning for different capabilities. All students are set the same task to tackle at their own level. Teaching staff are not aware of those students with special needs although they have identified gifted and talented students. Students from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers
98. Students rise to the occasion when presented with new challenges. Most show great interest in lessons and are prepared to work into break and lunch-time. Non-participants are actively engaged, but not always under the supervision of the teacher. The Duke of Edinburgh Award is offered in out-of-hours learning and includes outdoor activities. Many students participate in the scheme.
99. The strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- teaching is competent in the narrow range of activities offered;
 - students are good learners and work extremely hard, although good performance is rarely highlighted by the teachers and not always shared with their peers;
 - challenging tasks are set, which for the most skilled are not demanding enough and for the lower attainers sometimes proves too much so; in both situations achievement is limited by this weakness in planning;
 - teachers' use of technical vocabulary in lessons and in display is not always correct, so that students' learning is incorrectly guided;
 - assessments are not made against National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 so that students do not have an accurate picture about how well they are doing;
 - in gymnastics students use skills from their out-of-school dance activities, share them within their small group and incorporate them into their routines; these movements are rarely shown to the whole class.

Leadership and management

100. Insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection, although health and fitness has been introduced in Year 7 and fitness work in Years 8 to 11. The work of the department is inhibited by the lack of a dance specialist. It is also unnecessarily restricted by ineffective timetabling. On numerous occasions two different years are timetabled concurrently so that one year group always has to use outdoor facilities. As a consequence, inclement weather can prevent lessons taking place. The facilities are good, however, with a sports hall, shared assembly hall, extensive fields and hard surface areas for tennis and netball. No examination courses are offered in physical activities in Years 10 and 11, and this restricts gifted students from achieving success in this subject. A narrow range of activities in Years 7 to 9 increases out-of-school competitive success, but these fixtures only involve a small number of gifted and talented students. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are inadequate, particularly in relation to the curriculum, self-evaluation and assessment, and development has been too slow. There are few opportunities for team-teaching or for teachers to observe good practice. The physical education staff are good role models and their enthusiasm for the subject is conveyed to the students.

CITIZENSHIP

Provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The lack of whole school, strategic planning has resulted in only a few subjects contributing to the teaching of citizenship.
- Students' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11, partly because few units of work are taught.
- The newly appointed coordinator has produced a thorough programme of citizenship and personal and social education which is used effectively in Years 7 to 9.
- There are no arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning so that weaknesses in provision are not being picked up by senior managers.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory so that students are unsure about how well they are doing and how to improve.
- There are too few planned activities in which students take responsibility for work in the community so that their experience of being active citizens is limited.

Commentary

101. The appointment in the current year of an enthusiastic coordinator has led to a well-planned scheme of work for the weekly lesson in Years 7 to 11. Through the careful integration of citizenship and careers, the programme meets statutory requirements.

Achievement	satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11
Standards	above average by Year 9 below average by Year 11
Teaching and learning	good in Years 7 to 9 satisfactory Years 10 and 11
Leadership	satisfactory
Management	unsatisfactory

102. Students enter the school with standards above the national expectation which they maintain by Year 9. They acquire good knowledge and understanding of key topics such as their rights and responsibilities as citizens, the media and moral issues such as crime, punishment and drug abuse. Higher attainers use their very good literacy skills to enquire into local issues. Speaking and listening skills are developed well through group discussions. However, students are not always challenged to think independently. Students with special needs and those who are gifted and talented are not identified so that their progress cannot be measured. The average standards are not maintained by Year 11 so that students' achievement is unsatisfactory. Time constraints and lack of pace in the teaching have resulted in very limited coverage of topics in both citizenship and personal, social and health education. Students' ICT skills are unsatisfactory as there is limited access to computers.

103. The main strengths and weaknesses of the teaching are:

- teachers use the well-planned schemes of work to stimulate effective enquiry work and good discussion in Years 7 to 9;
- relationships are good and teachers manage and support students well so that satisfactory learning is achieved in the majority of lessons;
- students in Years 10 and 11 are too often insufficiently challenged because tasks are passive and the range of topics is limited;
- the quality of marking is too varied so that students do not always know how they can improve, especially in Years 10 and 11.

As a result of these features, students make far better headway in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. They respond better to the teaching and their attitudes and behaviour are consistently good.

Leadership and management

104. Leadership is satisfactory. The coordinator has prepared a clearly integrated plan and sets a good example through good teaching, commitment and organising separate files of students'

citizenship work. However, the subject suffers from a lack of whole-school strategic planning by senior managers and the governing body:

- no whole-school audit has been undertaken to identify subject contributions to citizenship so that few subjects have incorporated citizenship into their curriculum;
- staff have not been trained in order to raise their awareness of citizenship;
- insufficient time is allocated in Years 10 and 11 to enable all units of work to be implemented;
- the coordinator's monitoring role is ill-defined and unsupported so that there is no evaluation of the subject's effectiveness.

Students raise money for charity and there is a school council, but there are too few planned opportunities for students to participate actively in school or local community activities.

Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 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	2	50.0	80.1	50.0	23.1	25.0	29.9
Biology	10	80.0	65.2	0.0	11.1	23.0	20.6
Business studies	2	50.0	76.4	0.0	16.3	10.0	26.2
Chemistry	7	85.7	72.7	14.3	13.9	25.7	24.1
Classical studies	3	100.0	87.4	33.3	34.3	40.0	35.2
Drama	3	66.7	86.5	0.0	19.6	16.7	30.6
English literature	11	63.6	85.9	18.2	19.1	20.0	30.2
French	16	75.0	78.2	6.3	18.9	21.3	27.6
Design and technology	2	100.0	74.9	0.0	15.1	25.0	25.3
General studies	63	96.8	73.9	31.7	17.8	38.9	25.7
Geography	7	57.1	74.3	0.0	19.8	17.1	26.5
History	5	100.0	80.7	20.0	19.5	36.0	28.6
Information technology	8	100.0	67.0	0.0	10-9	37.5	21.4
Mathematics	9	88.9	61.9	33.3	17.1	36.7	22.1
Music	1	100.0	86.5	0.0	21.4	40.0	30.7
Other languages	1	100.0	82.6	100.0	42.9	60.0	36.2
Physics	7	71.4	68.6	0.0	14.4	17.1	22.7
Religious studies	4	100.0	80.2	50.0	22.6	47.5	29.8
Spanish	3	100.0	78.5	0.0	17.7	26.7	27.3
Sports studies	4	100.0	73.2	50.0	11.4	40.0	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	3	100.0	98.6	66.7	50.2	93.3	87.5
Biology	18	100.0	96.4	33.3	39.2	75.6	78.6
Business studies	6	100.0	98.7	16.7	36.8	73.3	80.1
Chemistry	7	100.0	97.6	71.4	49.0	97.1	84.9
Classical studies	16	100.0	99.5	25.0	55.9	80.0	90.9
Drama	8	100.0	99.5	0.0	40.1	57.5	83.6
English literature	30	100.0	99.5	36.7	46.5	83.3	86.5
French	9	100.0	98.8	33.3	51.5	73.3	87.6
Design and technology	6	100.0	97.8	33.3	35.0	86.7	77.9
General studies	10	100.0	94.7	60.0	31.0	94.0	73.1
Geography	20	100.0	98.7	20.0	44.5	66.0	84.0
German	2	100.0	98.4	100.0	47.9	110.0	84.8
History	9	100.0	99.0	44.4	44.6	93.3	84.6
Information technology	14	100.0	85.6	35.7	24.6	84.3	69.5
Mathematics	26	100.0	96.7	46.2	55.6	83.1	88.8
Music	6	100.0	98.8	50.0	38.9	93.3	81.1
Physics	15	100.0	96.7	33.3	44.6	72.0	81.7
Religious studies	11	100.0	98.8	54.5	46.7	92.7	85.6
Spanish	3	100.0	98.3	66.7	50.2	86.7	86.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Teachers have good subject knowledge and most convey it well to the students.
- ❑ Lack of departmental monitoring means that barriers to students' learning have not been identified or addressed.
- ❑ Students show very positive attitudes towards their English studies.
- ❑ Students develop into independent learners through group discussion, research and presentations to the class.
- ❑ A few students are not drawn sufficiently into class discussions so they are less challenged to form and justify their opinions.
- ❑ A range of A-level courses is not offered so that students have no choice.

Commentary

105. In 2003 the results in English literature were average compared with the national results for all schools, which was a good improvement on the previous year. English literature has become an increasingly popular choice but some students would like to have the option of studying English language.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both satisfactory</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both unsatisfactory</i>

106. The standards seen during the inspection reflect recent performance in examinations. Many students are articulate and work together well in groups and paired discussions. However, a significant number prefer to let the teacher or other students make the major contribution to the lesson. Students produce essays that make close reference to the text to support their arguments but the teaching of essay-writing skills is not helpful enough for lower attainers to improve their results. Most students show a good understanding of the themes and characters in books by a wide variety of authors from Webster to Huxley. Many display a keen interest in the derivation and meaning of language. Students have a high regard for their English course and particularly enjoy the associated theatre trips.

107. Teaching shows that:

- when teachers use their good subject knowledge and skilful questioning it extends the students' thinking and draws out more complex thoughts;
- relationships are positive and in most lessons there is a good level of involvement;
- when students are encouraged to develop their own responses to the texts and present their ideas to the class this provides challenge and successfully promotes independent learning;
- in a few lessons too much teacher talk means that the more reticent students, mainly female, are not sufficiently encouraged to articulate and develop their own viewpoints.

Leadership and management

108. Students are supplied with comprehensive notes and guidance which help them to gain a thorough understanding of the texts studied. Where classes are shared, differences in teacher styles can be a barrier for some students which leads to lack of progress in some areas. Some students do not get enough individual tutorial time because of large classes and staff absences. The lack of formal monitoring within the department means that these barriers to learning have not been identified or addressed. The lack of school monitoring means that these

weaknesses have not been picked up. The department lacks rigorous self-evaluation systems and has not been required to produce a detailed development plan.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

109. Students' communication skills are above average and enable them to cope well with the requirements of AS- and A-level courses. Students are not always encouraged to enhance these skills in discussion.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The focus of the inspection was on French. A lesson in Spanish was sampled. Good teaching successfully combined the teaching of important grammar with interesting discussion of the merits of beauty contests. Students were motivated to talk about the topic and to use the new grammar and they learned well as a result. The school has decided to discontinue the teaching of German but has undertaken to allow those who started courses to finish them. For this reason, a teacher from another school teaches Year 13 German. The planning for this course is meticulous and the teacher has devised excellent support strategies to minimise the disadvantages of this arrangement. Nevertheless, the students are justifiably concerned about the negative effects the situation is having on their A-level standards. In recent years one or two male students have joined A-level groups in modern languages, but too few to comment on the standards they attain.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-planned and structured teaching with good use of resources ensures that higher and average attaining students learn well.
- Lack of specialist guidance over students' choice of advanced courses leads to many struggling with French at this level.
- Over-reliance on setting independent work leads to under-achievement because it is insufficiently monitored.

Commentary

110. In 2003 results in A-level French were below the national average and around one tenth of those entered did not gain a pass grade. Over time results have varied from well above to well below average. This is because students often begin the course with GCSE grades which are well below average for A-level candidates.

Achievement	satisfactory
Standards	below average
Teaching and learning	both satisfactory
Leadership and management	both good

111. In the work seen standards are below those expected nationally. The school's system of recruiting students to A-level courses places much reliance on their best grades at GCSE. For many students of all levels of attainment their results in French are above those in other subjects. However, senior managers do not ensure that there is adequate specialist guidance for students. As a consequence, not all those beginning the French course have the linguistic skills to cope with the more complex aspects of grammar and the high standard of accuracy required. Around a fifth of the students who began AS-level French in 2002 either dropped out of the course or did not obtain a pass grade. Less than half of them went on to A-level in 2003. Given students' level of attainment on joining the course, achievement is satisfactory. Higher attainers produce accurate, well-argued written work on topics such as racism. Lower attainers find structuring their work difficult and their writing contains many elementary mistakes. All are offered extra help from their teachers in taught and independent sessions but

not all take up these opportunities. Students from minority ethnic groups attain as well as their peers. There are no students with special needs in the A-level French group.

112. The main strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- good planning and use of a wide range of resources providing students with knowledge of and practice in using new vocabulary and structures;
 - lower attainers find the work difficult and do not learn as well as higher attainers;
 - teachers provide students with help and encouragement to use additional resources to improve their work, although not all students take these up;
 - teachers mark students' work thoroughly and give them detailed advice which helps them to improve;
 - teachers do not monitor students' completion of extension work rigorously enough to ensure that all do the amount needed to cope with the course.

Leadership and management

113. The leadership of the department is committed to raising attainment. Thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses, recently completed, has led to good planning and strategies for improvement. The conversation classes for small groups with the French assistant offer valuable opportunities for students to practise and improve their speaking skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is unsatisfactory in relation to their prior attainment.
- New leadership is very good and good management is providing a basis for improved standards, as yet not reflected in results.
- The quality of teaching in lessons is undermined by unsatisfactory practice in assessment and inadequate marking of students' work over time.
- The curriculum, lacking a mechanics option, is unbalanced and so restricts options for study at a higher level.
- Staff and students have developed very good relationships which show mutual respect and a shared desire to succeed.

Commentary

114. A-level results in 2003 show an improvement on previous years but remain below average for higher attaining students.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>unsatisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both good</i>
<i>Learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>good</i>

115. The standard of work seen in Years 12 and 13 is at the national level, confirming the improvement in results in recent years. As students enter the sixth form with results well above the national average, their achievement is unsatisfactory. The standard of male students' work is better than that of female students. Students show a secure understanding of basic and more complex mathematical techniques which enables them to undertake advanced level work effectively. Year 13 students have difficulty in remembering formulae previously taught but use these formulae to develop ideas to integrate complex expressions. Year 12 students apply their knowledge of integration to find the area between two curves. However, their written work

does not provide an effective record or indicate the level of accuracy of their response to problems set. Students do not make sufficient use of ICT to aid their work.

116. Strengths and weaknesses in teaching are as follows:
- teachers have a thorough understanding of concepts and share ideas clearly and enthusiastically with their students so that students make very good progress in lessons;
 - the staff provide sufficient consolidation of ideas in most areas of study but there is inadequate development in some which results in incomplete understanding;
 - teachers neither check the accuracy of students' self-evaluation nor provide a comment on their progress; feedback to students is therefore limited to that given during lessons;
 - teachers' explanations are clear and worked examples are chosen well to form the basis for effective challenge.

Leadership and management

117. Leadership by the recently appointed head of department is very effective. She has shown a clear vision of how to improve standards and set in place a number of initiatives that are beginning to have positive effect. Expectations are high and relevant targets are set. Helpful changes have been made to the course structure. There is a detailed handbook but results are not analysed rigorously enough to identify areas of misunderstanding. A good team spirit exists and A-level teaching is shared effectively between the members of the department. There is satisfactory provision of a small ICT suite for A-level work but little use is made of ICT techniques. The fall in standards at A-level since the previous inspection is now being addressed but standards are not yet high enough. Overall improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

118. Students show a good grasp of mathematical ideas and basic skills and use them effectively. For example, they calculate half-life of radioactive isotopes and use high-level skills in a project involving analysing the various costs in a manufacturing process. There are no mathematical barriers to learning.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was physics. Lessons in chemistry and biology were also sampled. Chemistry was a very good single practical lesson while the biology – a double theory - lesson was satisfactory. Both lessons were in Year 12, with classes of male and female students, and in both students were making good progress at above average levels of attainment.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Committed, experienced teachers who deliver interesting and challenging lessons and who build on sometimes modest previous attainment to obtain encouraging results.
- Well-motivated, enthusiastic students who are interested and keen to learn.
- Very good leadership and management in a department with a firm sense of direction, ambition for the students and knowledge of how to achieve its goals.

Commentary

119. The 2003 results matched the national average. AS-level results improved upon 2002, with one third gaining A grades. At A-level all students gained a grade, with one third achieving A or B grades. In relation to their prior attainment many students achieved better results than predicted.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	both very good
Leadership and management	both very good

120. Recent results are reflected in the standards of written and oral work in lessons. Male students are more willing to provide answers and make suggestions, but all students are articulate and use correct vocabulary. Teachers ensure that everyone is involved. In experimental work, students co-operate well and share ideas and data willingly. Measurement and evaluation skills are greatly improved on GCSE standards and the levels of analysis, criticism and evaluation applied to data and text in synoptic questions are impressive. Students in both years are gaining increasing insight into the examiner's intentions and are improving their results. They are well motivated and include information from a range of sources in their contributions. Most of them are preparing for science-based careers.
121. Teaching in physics is very good because:
- lessons are well paced, challenging, incorporate a variety of activities which maintain interest and motivation and lead to very good learning;
 - teachers' expert subject knowledge and experience give students confidence;
 - very good relationships and a tutorial style of teaching with small groups enable deeper consideration and faster coverage of topics as well as unobtrusive support of individuals;
 - highly committed staff give extra lessons in their own time to circumvent timetable clashes.

Leadership and management

122. There is a clear sense of direction and good awareness of how to improve attainment while keeping students well informed beyond the examination syllabus. Commitment to student success is total and available resources are used to best advantage. A very efficient staff team combines subject expertise and examination experience to good effect. Students are motivated by staff determination and purposefulness. They are constantly reminded of how male and female scientists, working closely together, provide very positive role models. Terming this 'a very positive learning environment', students claimed this as one reason why male students from other schools join the course. Students rate library facilities highly and they make good use of Internet sources – mostly from home. Target setting is well established and students view the assessment system as supportive. They would welcome more reassurance about their progress in the intervals between formal assessments.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The course was not inspected in detail. Both specialist teachers of ICT were absent during the inspection period. Judgements are based on the scrutiny of work and discussions with students and senior staff. A Year 13 lesson was observed overseen by a specialist teacher from a neighbouring school who helped out during the inspection.

Standards in the work seen are above average and students' achievement is satisfactory. However, over time students have lacked sufficient support and guidance to enable them to achieve their potential. Judging by the inspection of students' work over the course the quality of teaching has been unsatisfactory. Assessment has not provided students with a clear ongoing understanding of their attainment and progress, nor with guidance for improvement. Nevertheless, the learning seen was good because of the good attitude, ability and motivation of the students.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

123. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. An audit of whole school provision for ICT has not been undertaken to identify resource and training needs. There is satisfactory use of ICT in geography, history, religious education and music but this is mainly for research on topics using the Internet. Subject areas do not contribute to the assessment of ICT capability.
124. Accommodation for teaching ICT is unsatisfactory and is not meeting the needs of the school. The rooms for ICT are small and the shape and layout make it difficult to supervise all the students effectively. Overall, the ICT resources for teaching and learning are unsatisfactory across the school. The stock of computers is becoming dated and many cannot be used with

new software programs to promote learning. Planning is not taking into account the long-term development of ICT for teaching and learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' very good attitude to their work aids their learning.
- Students' understanding of elements of physical and human geography is enhanced by well constructed fieldwork.

Commentary

125. Untypically for the department, the proportion of students gaining higher grades at A-level fell in 2003 to well below the national average. Standards at AS-level in 2003 were much improved with over half the students gaining A or B grades. The Year 12 results are representative of the work seen which show female students and the very small number of male students making equally good headway.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership and management	both good

126. The impressive portfolios of work are indicative of students' very good attitude to their learning. Students set high standards for themselves and, supported by sound assessment procedures, work hard to achieve their targets. They are helped to make good use of their time for individual research by teachers' research guidelines which include word definitions, reading lists and information on web sites. Consequently research is thoroughly carried out and information is used well to respond to examination and essay questions.

127. Relationships in the best lessons are a significant aid to students' learning. Lessons are enlivened with humour, teachers are encouraging and supportive and they use their accurate knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses to target work well. In a minority of lessons, however, relationships are difficult so that students feel that their hard work is not recognised and that their contributions to discussions are undervalued. In most lessons however, students are helped to learn effectively because:

- teachers share their enthusiasm for geography and use their good knowledge of examination requirements to prepare students well;
- lessons contain a good variety of learning stimuli and are an appropriate mixture of whole-class teaching and individual challenge and support;
- for longer assignments marking is good and summary comments tell students very clearly what they should do to improve;
- a very detailed departmental guide to marking is not used effectively for students to confirm their progress because staff comments rarely refer to it;
- teachers emphasise examination technique and writing skills to good effect so the majority of students write well-constructed and reasoned essays showing an increasing maturity over the two years.

Leadership and management

128. Department leadership and management set clear goals for teachers and students which reflect the commitment to maintaining high standards. Careful analysis of A-level and AS-level results has identified learning priorities which are being effectively tackled. The department is

looking to identify a greater range of activities to support lower attainers better. In developing less experienced colleagues, the department's leadership ensures that the curriculum is delivered well. This is reflected in the improved 2003 AS-level results. Resource priorities are clearly identified and are focused on ways to help students achieve as well as possible. In the current year they aptly include the updating of core texts.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A Year 12 textiles lesson and a Year 13 product design lesson were seen. In product design students were working at an average standard and achieving satisfactorily as a result of satisfactory teaching and learning. In textiles, good teaching and learning led to good achievement and above average standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Poor leadership and management of the department result in inefficient practices and a lack of clear guidance for students.
- Students' very positive attitudes and good relationships make the best of a difficult situation.
- Extra-curricular life drawing classes contribute very well to students' work.
- Inadequate resources restrict students' knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Unsatisfactory assessment procedures do not fully inform students of their progress.

Commentary

129. The number of students taking the A-level examination in 2003 was too small for reliable statistical analysis but results appear to show a fall from 2002 when standards were well above the national average. The number of entrants has fallen significantly since the last inspection contributing to an inconsistent trend in results over recent years.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>unsatisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both satisfactory</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both poor</i>

130. The small current Year 13 group entered the A-level course with well above average results at GCSE. The above average standards in their work reflect unsatisfactory achievement for these students over the sixth-form course. Very good quality sketchbook work by higher attainers shows very good explorations of ideas and media. Although often prolific by this stage, some students' work lacks adequate annotation to explain their thinking. Students use ICT effectively for research and to record their work in progress. They make very good use of regular life drawing sessions provided by the school and benefit from similar classes at a neighbouring college. Male students form a small and occasional proportion of this reduced entry and so any analysis of their results is unreliable.

131. At the time of the inspection the head of department was absent and the remaining, relatively new teacher was in charge, receiving advice and guidance from external advisers. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was satisfactory but evidence from students' folders and sketchbooks showed it to be unsatisfactory over time.

132. The significant features of teaching are as follows:

- good relationships and positive attitudes allow for open and fruitful discussions about developing projects despite the teacher's inexperience at this level;
- good guidance and recommendations for research about artists' works are hindered by inadequate visual resources;
- prior to the inspection students have received inadequate guidance on assessment criteria and so do not know what to do to improve their grades;
- written evaluations of projects have been infrequent and over generous.

Leadership and management

133. Weaknesses in departmental documentation and failures in establishing good working relationships have led to inconsistent and inefficient teaching. Planning, record keeping and general documentation for the department have proved inadequate in the absence of the usual teacher, resulting in inconsistent guidance for students. Assessment procedures are not rigorous enough to track students' performance or to identify their specific needs. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Issues raised then about assessment, achievement and resources remain unresolved.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good curriculum leadership, teaching and enrichment activities attract students from other schools leading to above average sixth-form enrolments.
- Students express the highest level of satisfaction with the teaching, guidance and support they receive.
- Because students are respected and valued they develop maturity, confidence and independence.
- Students' learning is restricted by inadequate computer resources.

Commentary

134. AS- and A-level results in 2003 were above the national average. Point scores were similar to the school average. Female students achieved slightly better results than male students at A-level and gained the two A grades. The trend over time is consistent. No students from minority ethnic groups are currently on music courses.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both very good</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>good</i>

135. Students commence study in Year 12 with a variety of attainment levels. There is no minimum GCSE entry requirement in music. The majority of students are good performers and this aspect of their skills is secure. They are also good at composing. The most imaginative and sophisticated work belongs to those students who specialise in composing at A-level, but there are also students with high potential in Year 12. Analysis, critical reasoning, extended writing and personal research, including the use of technical language, is average, but is better in Year 13 than in Year 12. Presentation, including music notation, is uniformly good. The weakest aspect is imitative composition in Year 13, where students have difficulty in assimilating the necessary familiarity and fluency to a high enough standard in the relatively short time available. Although all students have good computer skills, the lack of ICT resources severely restricts students' development in this area, especially during lessons. Because of inadequate resources music technology is no longer offered at A-level.

136. Some students who have transferred from other schools specifically to study music are certain that their expectations have been exceeded. All students are very happy with the quality of their learning and the opportunities they have to develop. This is because:
- very good teaching expects students to work at a high level and provides expert guidance;
 - students are treated with respect by their teachers, their views and efforts are valued and they are given the techniques to take control of their own learning;
 - the wide range of complementary musical skills in a group which is larger than usual provides resources that benefit everyone;
 - students have very good opportunities in extra-curricular activities to develop musical and personal skills and to take responsibility.

Leadership and management

137. Very good leadership has established a high profile and good reputation for music. Capable musicians from other schools are attracted to the high school. Higher than average numbers of students go on to higher education courses in music. Although departmental self-evaluation is at an early stage, the management of change and strategic planning are effective, resulting in good improvement in sixth form aspects since the previous inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No courses in the group were inspected in detail. A Year 13 lesson in sports studies was sampled. Satisfactory teaching led to satisfactory learning. Standards were average. Inter-house sports competitions are organised and refereed by sixth-form students. Individual students represent the district and county in athletics, cross-country and netball. School teams are successful in inter-school competitions.

BUSINESS

No courses in the group were inspected in detail and no lessons were observed.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

The provision of personal, social and health education and citizenship is unsatisfactory in the sixth form. The one lesson a week provided is not used constructively and there is no coherent, planned scheme of work to raise students' experience of wider moral and social issues. Opportunities for developing students' skills of enquiry and communication are too limited. Well-organised discussion with wide student involvement is infrequent. There are limited opportunities for students to be involved in school activities such as the school council, healthy eating and peer mentoring, but these are not positively planned in a coherent way.

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	5
How inclusive the school is		5
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5	5
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	4	4
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	5	5
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		5
Support, advice and guidance for students	5	5
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	5	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		5
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		6
The leadership of other key staff	5	5
The effectiveness of management	5	5

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