

INSPECTION REPORT

THE BEACON SCHOOL

Banstead

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125306

Headteacher: Mr J Darker

Lead inspector: Mr J Bald

Dates of inspection: 22 to 25 March 2004

Inspection number: 264058

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1411
School address:	Picquets Way Banstead Surrey
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Watts
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Beacon School is a large mixed comprehensive school on the outskirts of Greater London. It has 1411 students, including 173 in the sixth form. The main school has significantly more boys than girls. A significant number of students have a long journey to school. The school's social and economic context is broadly average, and the student population is stable. However, students have a wide range of backgrounds, and a significant minority come from an area that has a high level of social deprivation. Most students joining the school have reached average overall standards for their age. However, the proportion of students with special educational needs is above average, and includes a significant number with behavioural difficulties. The school has also identified weaknesses in many new students' reading. Nine-tenths of students are of White British background. Other students come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, and include a very small number learning English as an additional language.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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17541	Fran Ashworth	Team inspector	Mathematics (main school)
11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)
6432	Mick Sewter	Team inspector	Science
33727	Nick Vinall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) (main school)
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology, business education
20533	David Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design
16950	Paula Haes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
33160	Natalia Power	Team inspector	English (sixth form)
7465	Richard Brent	Team inspector	History
33015	Richard Winter	Team inspector	Geography
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10895	David Wasp	Team inspector	Religious education, citizenship
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31683	Stephen Beaven	Team inspector	Music
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	ICT (sixth form)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school and the value for money it provides are satisfactory.

Good leadership and management and careful budgeting enable the school to provide satisfactory education despite financial and staffing difficulties. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and good or better where staffing is stable. Standards are broadly average, and achievement is satisfactory, with some good features. Relationships are good. Most students enjoy school and want to contribute, but the poor attitudes and behaviour of a minority are a barrier to achievement.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher, managers and administrative staff lead and manage the school well.
- Teaching in most lessons is good or better, but other lessons have some weaknesses due to staffing difficulties.
- Good teaching and learning in the sixth form are leading to rising standards.
- There is good provision for care, for involving students in the school's work, and for learning outside lessons.
- Standards are high in history and religious education, but too low in modern foreign languages.
- The curriculum does not fully meet the needs of lower-attaining students in Years 10 and 11.
- Poor behaviour by a minority of students holds back learning and causes unpleasantness.

Since the last inspection, the school has improved its management, made satisfactory improvements in GCSE and A-level results, and extended provision for students who need extra support. The amount of good teaching has risen, but staffing difficulties affect standards in some subjects, and behaviour is now satisfactory rather than good. Overall, improvement is satisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is satisfactory. Work seen during the inspection in Year 11 was similar overall to the 2003 GCSE results. Standards are high in history, drama and religious education, and above average in several other subjects. They are average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). 2003 results were depressed by low results in modern languages and design and technology, which had staffing difficulties. Standards in modern languages are still well below average. Students reach average standards at the end of Year 9, with above average standards in mathematics, history and religious education, but below average standards in modern languages, music, design and technology and ICT. Students with special educational needs achieve well. Achievement is satisfactory overall in Year 9 and in Year 11.

Students in the sixth form reach average overall standards, and achievement is satisfactory. There is evidence of further improvements in standards as a result of good teaching and learning.

Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory and provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most students behave well and work hard, particularly when they are well taught. A minority do not behave properly, and there is some bullying and

vandalism. Attendance is average, but there is too much lateness in the morning. Provision for cultural development, including performances of music and drama, is improving rapidly.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education and the overall quality of teaching are satisfactory. Teaching is good or better in two-thirds of lessons, and very good to excellent in a quarter. These lessons challenge and at best inspire students, but they could achieve more in other lessons, and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching remains significant, particularly in modern languages. There are some gaps in homework, particularly among lower-attaining students. Most students' good attitudes contribute to learning, but the minority of students whose behaviour is poor take up too much of teachers' time.

The curriculum has been hit by staffing difficulties and illness. There are significant gaps in statutory requirements, and there are too few vocational courses in the main school. Inadequate dining accommodation wastes students' time through excessive queuing, and toilets are often unhygienic. Care and guidance provided to students are good, particularly if they need extra help with learning or behaviour. Relationships with other schools and colleges are satisfactory in the main school, but seriously underdeveloped in the sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and senior managers give a clear and effective personal lead, and manage the school well. Management of subjects and of the care of students is good, and non-teaching staff make a very effective contribution to management and communication. Financial management is very effective. Staffing difficulties affect the management of modern languages and citizenship.

Governors are in close touch with the school and fully involved in its direction, though they need to be more closely involved in the direction of the sixth form. Since the last inspection, they have had to manage an increasingly difficult financial situation, which has forced them to reduce staffing in the current year. Governance in these difficult circumstances has been satisfactory. Statutory requirements are not met for music and citizenship in Years 7 to 9, and religious education for some students in Years 10 and 11. There is no daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are satisfied with the education and care that the school provides, and pleased with learning opportunities outside lessons. Parents expressed concerns about homework, and parents and students shared concerns over lunchtime arrangements, toilets and the behaviour of some students. These concerns were borne out by inspection evidence.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the match of the curriculum to students' needs, particularly in vocational provision.
- Take further steps to improve the behaviour of a minority of students.
- Improve teaching, learning and achievement further, particularly in modern languages.
- Improve the condition of toilets and take action to reduce queuing time at lunchtime.

Sixth form

- Improve co-operation with other schools and colleges.
- Develop recruitment to courses that have small numbers of students.
- Extend the range of activities outside lessons.
- Take further action to improve attendance.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Improve provision for music and citizenship in Years 7 to 9 and for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and its cost-effectiveness are satisfactory.

Examination results are broadly average and have improved since the last inspection. Work seen during the inspection showed further improvement on these results. Overall achievement is satisfactory, and students with special educational needs achieve well. Leadership and management are good and the sixth-form budget is balanced. However, this is achieved at the cost of below-average teaching time in some subjects, and there are very limited enrichment opportunities outside lessons. On the whole, students have good attitudes and work hard, but the poor attendance of a minority is a barrier to their achievement.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching and learning are leading to rising standards in most courses.
- The sixth form is efficiently managed by the head of the sixth form and the administrative assistant.
- New vocational courses have been developed successfully to meet students' needs.
- Some teaching groups are very small, and there is no co-operation with other schools and colleges.
- There are too few activities outside lessons.
- Attendance is significantly lower than in the main school.

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	Satisfactory in English and French. Teaching ensures steady progress. It could be made more challenging to the needs of higher-attaining students in English, and more closely matched to individual needs in French.
Mathematics	Very good. Very good teaching enables students to tackle A-level work effectively, and leads to very good achievement. Leadership and management are very good.
Science	Good in biology. Standards are above average and teaching is very good, though more enrichment opportunities are needed. Students work very hard.
Information and communication technology	Good. Students achieve well across a wide range of courses that meet their needs well. Teaching and assessment of progress are good.
Humanities	Very good in history, and in work sampled in religious studies. Good in work sampled in geography. Effective and challenging teaching is leading to above average standards in all three subjects, though 2003 examination results were weaker in history and religious education. Leadership and management are very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory in media studies. There is very good practical work, but students' analytic skills need further development.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Good in leisure and tourism and in work sampled in physical education. Teaching, learning and achievement are good, and courses meet students' needs well.

Business	Good. Very effective teaching and learning lead to well above average A-level results, though there is limited provision for lower-attaining students.
Health and social care	Good. This new course is well adapted to students' needs. Effective teaching is leading to positive attitudes and good achievement.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students' work, progress and attitudes are closely assessed and tracked, and they receive good personal and academic guidance and support. There is a systematic approach to helping students develop good work habits and to promoting good attendance among the minority who do not understand the importance of this.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. The sixth form is very well managed on a day-to-day basis by the head of the sixth form and the administrative assistant, both of whom give students a very good model of considerate and professional behaviour. Senior management is effective and keeps the governors very well informed. Co-operation with other schools and colleges, however, is seriously underdeveloped, and governors are not involved closely enough in the strategic development of the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Most students are satisfied with the quality of education they receive, and particularly the quality of teaching. A minority felt that they could be better challenged in some lessons, and a large number said that sixth form accommodation was not adequately heated. Both positive and negative comments from students found support in inspection evidence.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students reach average standards overall in Year 9, Year 11 and in the sixth form. This represents satisfactory achievement overall, with good achievement throughout the school among students with special educational needs and the small number with English as an additional language.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By Year 11, students reach average standards in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- Standards in Year 11 are well above average in history and in the religious education GCSE course, and above average in geography, art and design, drama and music.
- Standards in several subjects are still recovering from the effects of serious staffing shortages.
- Students with special educational needs and those with minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well.
- The achievement of a minority of students is held back by their poor attitudes and behaviour.
- Standards in modern foreign languages are well below average and achievement is poor.
- Vocational courses contribute to achievement in the main school and in the sixth form.
- Achievement in the sixth form is very good in mathematics and history.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.4 (32.5)	33.3 (33.3)
Mathematics	36.3 (34.1)	35.3 (34.7)
Science	33.3 (32.7)	33.7 (33.3)

There were 234 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	49 (50)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	96 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	34.0 (34.6)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 247 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Students join the school with average results in National Curriculum tests at the end of their primary education, and the average results they achieve in Year 9 and Year 11 represent satisfactory achievement from this starting point, particularly in view of weaknesses in reading identified in standardised tests used by the school. There is little difference, overall, in the standards reached by boys and girls in Year 9 tests, at GCSE or in work seen during the inspection. However, boys tend to do better in mathematics and science, and to do particularly poorly in modern languages. Most students with minority ethnic backgrounds have good attitudes to school and achieve well. So do most students with special educational needs,

though those with behavioural difficulties are often among those whose poor attitudes to school are holding back their progress. There was evidence during the inspection of satisfactory to good achievement in vocational courses for these students, though the school was not able to provide places for all students who were likely to benefit. The achievement of gifted and talented students is satisfactory overall. They do very well in subjects where teaching is consistently strong, and this leads to a high number of A and A* grades in history at GCSE. In most subjects, however, teachers are more likely to modify work for lower-attaining than for exceptionally able students, and this limits the consistency of learning and achievement.

2. Across the school, the most significant variations in standards and achievement are between those subjects where stable staffing has allowed middle managers to build strong teams, notably in humanities, and those where staffing difficulties have seriously interfered with the continuity of learning. During the inspection, these difficulties were particularly clear in modern languages, which had no head of department or second in department, and in citizenship, where leadership had been affected by long-term illness. In music, where there is only one teacher, the cut in provision to one lesson per fortnight in Years 7 to 9 leads to below-average standards and unsatisfactory achievement despite teaching of high quality. Standards in modern languages were also affected by unsatisfactory and at times poor teaching, some, though not all, by unqualified teachers, and by limitations in the subject curriculum and resources, notably the under-use of ICT. During the inspection, standards and achievement in science and design and technology were recovering from the effects of recent staffing difficulties and were satisfactory. By the time of the inspection, physical education had recovered from the effects of its staffing difficulties, and students were achieving well. Achievement is also very good in drama and art and design in response to very effective teaching, and among students taking religious education to GCSE. Good teaching of mathematics is leading to above-average standards in Year 9, though standards in Year 11 remain broadly average.
3. Since the last inspection, improvements in the overall quality of teaching have enabled the school to improve the proportion of students achieving five A*-C passes at GCSE from below average to average. Nevertheless, the improvement between Year 9 and Year 11 in 2003 was lower than in most schools nationally, chiefly because of low results in modern languages and design and technology. Nevertheless, the school only narrowly missed its overall GCSE target, and beat its target for national tests in Year 9. Senior and middle managers and governors are in close touch with these patterns in standards, and take what action they can to improve them: by setting realistic targets, identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching, and giving additional support to departments in difficulty. Overall, the improvement in standards since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	93.9 (89.1)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	24.9 (14.0)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	227.4 (222.7)	258.2 (254.5)

There were 58 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. A-level results were below average at the time of the last inspection, though work of average quality was seen during the inspection itself. There has been satisfactory improvement in A-level and AVCE results since that time, and they are now in line overall with national average levels; the proportion of pass grades is above average, but the proportion of high grades is below average. A-level and AS results in 2003 showed considerable variation between subjects. They were well above average in business studies and above average in geography, but below average in mathematics, and well below average in English, art and design and

design and technology. Most groups taking AS examinations in 2003 were too small to enable national comparisons to be made. Where such comparisons were possible, standards were well above average in business studies, but below average in religious education and well below average in physics and physical education.

5. The standard of work seen during the inspection was also broadly average, but was better than the most recent examination results, particularly in subjects where performance had been weak. Standards were above average in history, geography, business education and biology, and below average only in modern languages. Standards are broadly average in the new vocational courses in health and social care, and leisure and tourism. The proportion of students with special educational needs in the sixth form is above average, and these students were achieving well during the inspection. Otherwise, there are no significant differences in the achievements of different groups of sixth form students, except for a minority whose achievement is held back by poor attendance. The school is taking systematic action to tackle this issue, but this has as yet had limited impact. Taken together, the most recent examination results and the standard of work seen during the inspection represent satisfactory overall achievement.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are mixed, but satisfactory overall. Attendance is satisfactory, but punctuality is not. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students want to learn and behave well, but the attitudes and behaviour of a minority are poor.
- There are good relationships among all groups of students, and between students and teachers.
- There are few permanent exclusions; the rate of fixed-period exclusions has been high, but is falling.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory in the sixth form and in some lower-attaining classes in Year 11.
- There is some bullying, despite extensive efforts to combat it.
- Students learn to respect the views of others, and develop a clear sense of right and wrong.
- Most tutorial periods do not contribute to students' personal development.

Commentary

6. A high proportion of parents and students expressed concern about behaviour and bullying prior to the inspection, and their views were partly borne out by inspection evidence. Inspectors found that behaviour in most classes and by most students around the school was good, and that it was often very good when students were well taught. A friendly and purposeful atmosphere encourages in most students an enthusiasm to learn and to take part in extra-curricular activities. Students respect each other's views, and relationships between staff and students and amongst students are good. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language, told inspectors that they had no experience of racism, and the school does not tolerate racist or homophobic behaviour. Students welcome opportunities to take responsibility, and carry out tasks efficiently.
7. On the other hand, a significant minority of students do not share these good attitudes, and there is significant misbehaviour in some lessons. Some, but not all, of this comes in response to unsatisfactory teaching. Even when it is well handled, the misbehaviour slows the pace of work and has some impact on learning. There was no direct evidence of bullying during the inspection, but discussions with students and tutors and the school's records showed that there was an element of bullying, despite extensive efforts by the staff and the school council to eliminate it. This evidence also suggested that bullying was more likely to take place off the

school site, where it is more difficult for the school to deal with it, and that some bullying reflected disputes between families outside school.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1285	201	2
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	19	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	17	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	19	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	13	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	7	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	10	0	0

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

- Fixed-period exclusions were very high last year, though permanent exclusions were low. Measures to promote good behaviour and reduce exclusions, including the learning support centre, have led to a significant reduction in fixed-period exclusions during this school year, though the level remains higher than in most schools. Most of these exclusions are short, but a minority are lengthy enough to make it more difficult for students to rejoin the school. The rate of fixed-period exclusion also reflects the increasing number of students who join the school with serious behavioural problems, for whom there is no alternative local provision. The school does all it can, including using external advice, to minimise exclusions and to be fair to those excluded. It works effectively to re-integrate students who have been excluded from other schools, and provides additional support for those who are in public care. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds are rarely excluded.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.3%
National data	7.2%

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.4%
National data	1.1%

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

9. Measures to promote attendance are good, and most parents ensure that their children attend regularly. As a result, attendance in the main school has been maintained at an average level, though unauthorised absence is above average. Attendance is, however, unsatisfactory in Year 11, chiefly because of low attendance in some classes for lower-attaining students; attendance was often worst in classes where these students were achieving less than they should. Punctuality in the morning is affected by many students' travelling difficulties, but it is unsatisfactory; almost a fifth of students have been late more than twenty times this year.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

10. Students are able to distinguish right from wrong and have respect for others' views and beliefs. Assemblies encourage students to have the confidence to act in accordance with their own principles, irrespective of how others act; this is a frequent theme in religious education lessons, which are relevant and of high quality. Other subjects, including business education and history, make a point of introducing students to the ethical aspects of the subject, including matters of war and peace.
11. Students are encouraged to develop good social skills because of the high value placed on the sharing of ideas in a wide range of subjects. In physical education, teachers emphasise the importance of fair play and of supporting one another while following the rules of the game. Students are willing to participate in, and respond to, artistic and cultural enrichment offered to them in subjects such as music, where they learn about Indian music, or art, where they study a range of art from different cultures.
12. Spiritual development is satisfactory overall. This is chiefly because of very good opportunities for reflection in religious education and in lessons in those other subjects where teaching is of high quality. Assemblies are broadly Christian in character, and include opportunities for reflection. However, the school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. With some exceptions, daily tutorial periods do not provide enough opportunities for reflection or spiritual development, and in many there is too much wasted time.
13. Students develop good understanding of their own and other cultures, and the school is developing its provision in this area very well. Religious education, music and art and design offer very good opportunities for students to explore the underlying values of cultures in British society and the wider world, and innovative features include an effective joint project on the art of other nations between the art and design and ICT departments. There are visits from professional theatre companies, and students take part in poetry festivals. Music and drama offer very good opportunities for a wide range of students, including the talented, to develop their performance skills to a high standard.

Sixth form

14. The personal development of sixth-form students has good features and is satisfactory overall. Students have good guidance on using their time outside lessons, and time spent on private study is monitored. The school is taking part in the local education authority's very well designed graduation scheme, and students have good opportunities to contribute to the school community through voluntary work and the school and sixth-form councils. Additional

enrichment activities for the sixth form have, however, been severely curtailed to help balance the school's budget.

- Sixth-form attendance is significantly lower than in the main school. Most students attend regularly, but a minority have poor attendance. The head of the sixth form and the sixth-form administrative assistant tackle this issue through very close monitoring and personal interviews with students, and have improved morning registration procedures. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these steps, however, and significant numbers of students still arrive too late to register in the mornings.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory, with good features, in the main school, and good in the sixth form. The curriculum in the main school is unsatisfactory because it does not meet the needs of a significant number of students and has gaps in statutory requirements. The sixth-form curriculum is satisfactory. The school takes good care of students and provides them with good guidance, but some accommodation is inadequate.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the main school, and good in the sixth form. Most teaching is good or better, but a third in the main school is limited in scope, and just under a tenth is unsatisfactory. The learning of a minority of students is hindered by their poor attitudes. The quality and use of assessment are good throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good overall in history, art and design, music and religious education.
- Teaching is good overall in English, mathematics, ICT, geography and physical education.
- The overall quality of sixth-form teaching is good.
- Teaching in several departments suffers from staff turnover and shortages. It is unsatisfactory in modern languages.
- Learning benefits from consistent assessment and tracking of students' progress.
- Teaching and learning are good or better in two thirds of lessons; teaching in the remaining lessons is limited in scope and challenge.
- There are some gaps in homework, mostly for lower sets.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 186 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8 (4%)	43 (23%)	74 (40%)	47 (25%)	12 (6%)	2 (1%)	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.

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher and his senior colleagues have given priority to maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and to developing leadership in faculties and departments. This has led to significant improvements in the bulk of the school's teaching, and the proportion of good teaching has increased. As at the last inspection, roughly a quarter of teaching is of very good to excellent quality; where this is provided on sustained basis, as in history, art and design, drama and religious education, it enables students to achieve very well and to reach high standards by Year 11. On the other hand, the consistency of learning has been affected both during the inspection and in the two years preceding it by staffing difficulties, which have increased the proportion of teaching that is less than satisfactory. While teaching in physical education had recovered to a good standard by the time of the inspection, recovery

in several other departments, notably science and design and technology, is less secure, and some of the teaching that is satisfactory leads to learning that is only just adequate.

17. The school's good teaching is the basis of the satisfactory overall pattern of achievement in the school, despite the problems it has faced. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good, in mathematics and English throughout the school, and in ICT in Years 10 and 11. The good teaching stems from the consistent and well thought-out approach taken by heads of department. It is well planned, with a good range of interesting activities that engage students and generate a good learning atmosphere and sense of purpose. As a result of its good introduction of the principles of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9, the school has successfully tackled some weaknesses in teaching these years identified in the last inspection by ensuring that lessons have clear goals that are clearly understood by students. Teachers in most lessons manage classes well, and make good use of questioning to ensure that students understand their work and to clarify thinking. They form good relationships even with students who do not begin with positive attitudes, although these students' behaviour sometimes takes up a lot of staff time, even where the overall quality of teaching is good. Most teachers pay good attention to students' communication, literacy and number skills, and to ICT skills where equipment is available. Most marking, particularly in English and mathematics, gives students good guidance on ways of improving their work. Homework is regularly set in most classes, but parents said that there were significant gaps in it for some students. Inspection evidence confirmed this view, most often in homework for lower-attaining students.
18. The school's very good and excellent teaching offers a dynamic learning experience that makes an important contribution to students' personal development as well as to learning. Teachers in these lessons have very high levels of understanding of their subjects, combined with very clear understanding of patterns of learning among different groups of students. They use varied and interesting learning resources, which they have often identified themselves, and have a very clear focus on the requirements of examinations and on ways of developing students' thinking in order to meet them. Teaching of this quality was seen in several subjects during the inspection, but was predominant in history, art and design and religious education. In music, however, very good teaching by the school's only specialist teacher is not enough to make up for gaps in learning caused by students in Years 7 to 9 having only one lesson every two weeks.
19. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, work is not planned effectively to engage students' interest, and lessons lack pace and challenge. This leads to misbehaviour and to difficulties in managing the class. A minority of unsatisfactory teaching is caused by a lack of detailed subject knowledge on the part of the teacher. In modern languages, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, and sometimes poor, particularly in work with lower sets. There is also unsatisfactory teaching in citizenship and personal, social and health education, where middle management has been interrupted by long-term illness.
20. The school has extended its arrangements for assessing and tracking progress since the last inspection. Teachers and managers track work closely, and set clear targets that are regularly reviewed with students. Teachers in most lessons use formal and informal assessment well to ensure that work is pitched at the right level, and engage students in evaluating their own work. Where the teaching is very good or excellent, assessment is always an important strength.

Sixth form

21. Teaching and learning in the sixth form during the inspection were good or better in over four-fifths of lessons, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Sixth-form teachers know their subjects well, and make good use of assessment to plan work that engages students' interest and develops their thinking. They make good use of small groups to ensure that all students are fully involved, and plan effectively to meet the needs of lower-attaining students, including those with special educational needs. This leads to a strong sense of purpose, which most students carry through into their work outside lessons. A minority, however, do not understand the need for high levels of attendance and independent work, and the school is working to improve these students' work-rate through personal guidance and monitored attendance in the sixth form work-room. Teaching is good in the new vocational courses in leisure and tourism and health and social care.
22. In a fifth of lessons, and in some analysis of students' work, teaching enabled students to make sound progress, but could have stretched their thinking further. This teaching was seen in modern languages, English and in some lessons in business and media studies. As in the main school, teaching in a quarter of lessons is very good, with the occasional excellent lesson. Excellent lessons were seen in history, and in German, where the lesson was taught by a visiting part-time advanced-skills teacher. Very good lessons were seen in a wide range of subjects, and were the norm during the inspection in mathematics, history and biology. The school tracks sixth form students' progress very closely against target grades, and gives students good feedback on their performance. The quality of sixth-form teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.

The curriculum

The curriculum is not meeting the needs of significant numbers of students, mostly in Years 10 and 11, and some statutory requirements are not met, chiefly because of staffing difficulties. Its overall quality is therefore unsatisfactory. There are good opportunities for enrichment and for learning outside lessons. Provision of staffing is unsatisfactory but accommodation and resources for learning are satisfactory overall. The sixth form offers a good range of courses, but little opportunity for enrichment outside lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements are not met in music and citizenship in Years 7 to 9, or in religious education in Years 10 and 11, and there is no daily act of collective worship.
- Students appreciate the main school's good opportunities for learning outside lessons, especially in sport, visits, drama, music and the library. There is very little provision for enrichment outside lessons in the sixth form.
- There is good provision for students with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language.
- There are good vocational courses in the sixth form, but too few of them for students in Years 10 and 11.
- Learning in some subjects is held back by weaknesses in the timetable.
- Very effective administrative support is enabling teachers to concentrate on teaching.
- The quality and condition of toilets is unsatisfactory, and there is too little accommodation for lunch.

Commentary

23. The curriculum permits satisfactory achievement across the school, but has weaknesses that prevent it from promoting good achievement. The school has tackled weaknesses identified during the last inspection in ICT, art and design and physical education, and has extended its

provision well to meet the increasing numbers of students with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Provision in these areas is now good, with well-organised additional learning support for those with special educational needs, although support for students with special educational needs, is limited by the schools' relatively low number of teaching assistants. New students, including refugees, are given good support in settling in to the school and in learning English. The school makes satisfactory provision across subjects for literacy, numeracy and ICT, and it is making effective use of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 in most subjects. Provision for gifted and talented students is satisfactory; they are identified and given appropriate challenge in most of their work, but there is some inconsistency in challenge between subjects. Learning in some subjects, notably mathematics and modern languages, is hindered by timetabling weaknesses, sometimes caused by staffing difficulties, that result in lessons being bunched together and too many classes have more than one teacher for a subject.

24. The breadth and quality of learning opportunities are seriously restricted by staffing difficulties, which have been made worse during the year of the inspection by late cuts in the school's budget. As there is only one music teacher, students in Years 7 to 9 have only one music lesson per fortnight, and a cut in teaching time for the current academic year prevents a fifth of students in Year 11 from taking part in religious education. Severe staffing difficulties have had a particular impact on learning in modern languages, both for lower-attaining students and for those wishing to study to languages. Provision for citizenship and for personal, social and health education have been restricted by long-term illness of the manager; the programmes are weakly organised, and there is some unsatisfactory teaching in personal, social and health education. The school is widening the range of vocational courses and work-related learning, though its efforts have been hindered by a lack of places in local colleges. It accepts that more provision is needed, and is extending the range of colleges with which it works. Provision for flexible learning, particularly among lower-attaining students, is also held back by the large number of subjects that all have to take to GCSE.
25. Good participation in an interesting and varied programme of extra-curricular activities contributes substantially to the school's ethos, and the involvement of all groups of students contributes to racial harmony. The many support classes help students to achieve better academically. Students value the good sport, music and drama provided. They extend their social and cultural development through many visits within the locality and outside, including residential visits, trips to Berlin, Kenya and the battlefields of World War I. Students make good use of the school's attractive and well-organised library, and the rate of borrowing is significantly higher than in most schools. Students share good access to the careers library and receive sound advice from teachers about future educational and careers options. Although there have been difficulties organizing opportunities, most students benefit from a work placement.
26. Resources for teaching and learning are adequate overall. There are good resources in some subjects and in the library, but teachers in some subjects, notably modern languages, have too little access to ICT. Inadequate accommodation for the number of students taking school lunch, however, results in many students wasting most of their lunch break in queuing up, and students and parents had well-founded concerns about the state and number of toilets. Some are unhygienic, and locks on the doors are often vandalised. The school has plans to address its accommodation problems, but it is not yet in a position to finance them.

Sixth form

27. The sixth form curriculum meets students' needs well, through a good range of A-level, AVCE and other vocational courses. A good range of new subjects and courses has been introduced since the last inspection, and provision for ICT has been extended. Students have satisfactory opportunities for careers education and are involved in activities such as Young Enterprise. There are effective links with two local major companies.

28. The general studies courses enable all students to enhance their personal, social and moral development and to develop their awareness of citizenship, but the school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all students. Enrichment opportunities are restricted, and have been reduced as a result of staffing and budgetary pressures. Nevertheless, the Surrey graduation scheme is providing a good extension of enrichment activities, and there are some good opportunities for students to contribute to the community through the school council and voluntary work with younger students. Students and their parents said that accommodation was not heated satisfactorily, and inspectors agree.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes good care of students' welfare, health and safety, though the effectiveness of this work is held back by shortcomings in accommodation. It provides high levels of support, advice and guidance, which are firmly based on the monitoring of progress. The school consults students effectively and acts on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff provide very good support, advice and guidance, based on detailed tracking and reporting systems, whose information is regularly shared with parents and students.
- The school supports those from all backgrounds very effectively.
- There is effective support for students who need special help.
- The school has close and effective relations with most outside agencies.
- The school consults students extensively, involves them, and acts on their suggestions.

Commentary

29. Students are very highly valued, and both they and their parents recognise that teachers know students well and treat them fairly. Students know they have access to highly professional support and guidance, and that there is always at least one member of staff with whom they can develop a thoroughly trusting relationship. Since the last inspection, the school has set up effective systems to meet the needs of groups of students who need additional support. The student support centre has a positive effect on those whose behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion, and is contributing to the falling trend in exclusion. Induction arrangements for new students, which include a day's team-building outing for students joining Year 7 and the 'Talk in Confidence' room for students in Years 7 and 8, are very good, and there is effective provision for students with English as an additional language, including refugees. The school monitors overall performance well in the main school and very well in the sixth form. It keeps students and parents aware of progress. Helpful, impartial guidance on careers is available.
30. A wide range of opportunities is available for students to take responsibility. Older students, in particular, attend to their duties seriously and provide strong support to others. The school consults students through the school and year councils and by surveys such as the recent bullying questionnaire. It acts on their advice and both students and staff see this consultation as worthwhile.
31. Good systems are in place for maintaining and reviewing health and safety, including proper risk assessment. Child protection practices are up-to-date and satisfactory, and medical arrangements are good. The school makes full and effective use of all available support from outside agencies. Access to the Internet is strictly controlled and all equipment is regularly tested. Students and staff work in a predominantly healthy, safe and secure environment and the school actively promotes healthy eating through high quality food in the Bistro. The school is taking action on minor health and safety deficiencies noted during the inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and the local community are good. Those with other schools and colleges are satisfactory in the main school, but there is too little co-operation with other schools in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress and about the school's activities.
- The school is good at involving parents and seeking their views. It deals well with concerns and complaints.
- Parents' concerns about behaviour and gaps in homework were confirmed in part by inspection evidence.
- There is no shared sixth-form provision with other schools.
- Links with the local community are extensive, varied and of value to students.

Commentary

32. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning at school and at home. Many keep a close eye on progress through the homework diary, though not all do this, and this makes it more difficult for the school to promote regular homework. Parents turn out in force to the school's social events and for specific meetings, such as the discussion on the recent budget cuts. A small number of parent and community volunteers provide effective support to the school in reading and in lessons.
33. Most parents are happy with the quality of information they receive. The prospectuses and the governors' annual report to parents are informative and thoroughly professional. There is a good half-termly newsletter, supported by detailed curriculum information and a very helpful handbook for new parents. Annual reports on students give parents a lot of information on performance and standards. Most are complemented by an interim report concentrating on standards and effort. Most parents welcome the academic monitoring days, when targets are set, together with rapid contact with heads of year when a student's progress is either very good or causing concern. Most parents agree that the school is good at keeping them informed and consulting them on specific matters. The faculty administrators are particularly effective at maintaining school contact with parents, and the school sets considerable store by the advice it receives from a focus group that discusses important issues such as behaviour. This group is open to all parents. Parents' evenings are well organised and parents are generally happy that the school deals effectively with concerns and complaints.
34. The main school has satisfactory relationships with other schools and colleges. Arrangements for students transferring from primary schools are satisfactory in view of the very large number of schools sending students, and good for those with special educational needs. Academic links, however, are limited. The school is developing links with local colleges to provide flexible learning and vocational courses as quickly as it can, though there are too few places to meet all of its needs. There are good plans to work with a wider range of colleges in the next academic year. There are, on the other hand, no shared courses with other sixth forms and colleges, despite the very small numbers of students taking some courses. The school has recently initiated discussions with other sixth forms to improve on this position. The school has a sound range of community links, including annual visits to Wimbledon, where students act as ball boys and girls, and sponsorship of the mentoring programme by a major local company. Students make a good contribution to the community through their extensive involvement with charities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good in the main school and in the sixth form. The headteacher, leadership group and other managers provide effective leadership and management. The work of the governors has good features and is satisfactory overall. The school is not meeting statutory

requirements for citizenship and music in Years 7 to 9, and for religious education for a quarter of students in Years 10 and 11. It does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and other managers provide a strong personal lead and good management.
- Governors are well organised and fully involved in the direction of the school.
- Subjects and arrangements for the care of students are well managed.
- Funds are well allocated to reduce exclusion, and to support students who need extra help.
- In making cuts in provision, governors have not given sufficient priority to meeting statutory requirements.
- Non-teaching staff make a highly effective contribution to day-to-day and strategic management.
- Some aspects of teaching, learning and the curriculum suffer from staff shortages in middle management.
- Teaching is closely and effectively monitored by the leadership group.

Commentary

35. Changes in the school's circumstances since the last inspection have posed considerable challenges to the headteacher and governors. The number of students has risen in the main school and sixth form, and the proportion with additional learning and behavioural needs has risen significantly. The cost per student was above average at the time of the last inspection, and is now below average, while the number of students per teacher has risen very significantly, from 14.7 to 18.7. The governors are well organised and in close touch with all aspects of the school's life and work; they monitor standards and provision closely, and are fully involved in the school's direction. They have put in place suitable policies for race equality and for special educational needs. Governors have good arrangements to consult parents and students, compare the school's work with that of similar schools, use competitive tendering where appropriate, and have had to take difficult decisions over the services the school should and should not provide.
36. These decisions are made acutely difficult by financial information that arrives too late to enable the governors to plan ahead, and they received their budget for the current year too late to deal with necessary reductions in staffing through planned redundancy. Their decision to work on the basis of natural wastage and to reduce the taught week by 50 minutes has, however, left too few staff and too little teaching time to meet statutory requirements in music in Years 7 to 9 and in religious education for a significant number of students in Years 10 and 11. Governors did, on the other hand, protect GCSE courses and gave priority to funding the school's additional support for students at risk of exclusion. The school has plans to restore the lost teaching time from the beginning of the next school year. While assemblies meet the requirement for an act of collective worship, they do not take place daily for all students, and much tutorial time is not used effectively. Overall, the governance of the school in these difficult circumstances is satisfactory.
37. As at the time of the last inspection, the headteacher provides a very strong and sympathetic personal lead throughout the school, setting an example of professionalism, kindness and consideration for others to staff and students alike. He knows a very high proportion of students personally, and the encouragement he provides through his constant contact with them makes a major contribution to good relationships throughout the school. With his senior colleagues, he works effectively to ensure equal opportunities for all students, and the school has taken a lead in reintegrating students excluded from other schools. The school is developing flexible learning as quickly as it can, but its work in the main school has been constrained by a lack of capacity in alternative provision. The school has developed links with a broader range of colleges for the next year.

38. Effective management in difficult circumstances has enabled the school to make satisfactory improvements in standards since the last inspection. While the leadership group is small, its efficiency and hard work meet the needs of the school well, with particular strength in the monitoring of teaching. The school has made full use of the new workload agreement, and administrators and managers who are not qualified teachers make a very strong contribution to planning, communication, and the day-to-day running of the school. There has been a major improvement in middle management since the last inspection, and the management of all departments that had stable staffing is now good and frequently better. Care and provision for students with special educational needs are managed well, and the faculty structure contributes well to the pattern of improving teaching by enabling teachers in related subjects to share ideas and techniques. This feature is very strong in humanities, although the business studies and ICT faculty does not take enough account of the differences between the subjects. Remaining weaknesses in management are the result of long-term illness and staffing difficulties in modern languages and in the citizenship and personal, social and health education programme, where the lack of a clear management lead contributes to the weaknesses set out in the subject paragraphs. The school is doing everything it can to fill these gaps.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,292,564	Balance from previous year	-37, 979
Total expenditure	4,373,192	Balance carried forward to the next	-118,607
Expenditure per student	3208		

39. The school has agreed plans with the local education authority for the elimination of this deficit. Financial management is very efficient, with a strong lead from the bursar. The need for close budgeting has focused the school's attention closely on value for money and the principles of best value, which are applied effectively. The school balances spending effectively between the main school and the sixth form.

Sixth form

40. The recently appointed head of the sixth form leads and manages it well, with very effective support from the administrative assistant. Teaching, students' performance and attendance are closely monitored, with effective encouragement for good work and a systematic approach to promoting work outside lessons and attendance. The range of courses has been developed to encourage wider participation in education, and there is good support for the fifth of students who have special educational needs. On the other hand, while new courses are of good quality, several have very small groups of students, and the school has had to cut activities outside lessons, and to provide some courses through distance learning, in order to keep to a balanced budget. The governors are kept in close touch with sixth form developments through good reports to the curriculum committee, but are not sufficiently involved in its strategic development. They have initiated discussions with other sixth forms on co-operation, but these have not yet led to any shared teaching.

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 **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' reading and writing skills are improving as a result of new strategies for learning.
- Teachers are committed to raising the standards attained by students at all levels of ability.
- Students enjoy good relationships with their teachers and as a result they achieve as well as they can.
- Teachers make good use of questioning, but students have too few opportunities to discuss their ideas in detail.
- ICT skills are not used frequently enough to promote independent learning.

Commentary

41. Students reach broadly average standards in Years 9 and 11. This represents good achievement from the standards among those joining the school in Year 7, as the school has identified weaknesses in reading among many students. As a result of well-designed reading programmes that have been recently introduced, students make good progress and most achieve well by the end of Year 9. They read a good range of literature and non-fiction texts, which provide a rich source for their original written work. Students' stories are lively, imaginative and sometimes amusing. Encouraged by their enthusiastic teachers, students continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11, and achieve some good results in the GCSE examinations particularly in English literature. By Year 11, most students write competently and develop a personal writing style, which they adapt appropriately for a range of readers. However, speaking skills are less well developed, and many students do not have the confidence to express their ideas concisely and clearly to sustain an argument.
42. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good relationships with their students and encourage them to achieve as well as they can. Lessons are well prepared, with a range of activities tailored to meet the wide diversity of students' needs. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own achievements because at the beginning of each lesson teachers explain what they expect students to learn and the skills they will be developing. Teachers' skilful questioning encourages students to think for themselves and search out the meanings from stories, plays, poems and non-fiction material. As a result, students' understanding is firmly embedded in their knowledge of the subject matter. However, in some lessons, particularly in Year 7, teachers set complex tasks, which leave students confused about what is expected of them. Lower-attaining students are well supported by units of work designed to improve their achievement, and students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although there are not enough teaching assistants to help the increasing number of students needing support. Higher-attaining students are effectively challenged with extended tasks, and a growing number reach very high grades at GCSE.
43. All work is marked carefully, with good advice to students on ways to improve their writing. Assessment systems are used effectively to track progress and to identify underachievers and those who need more challenging work. The administrative assistant provides excellent support, particularly with her assessment records which chart the progress made by individual students throughout the school. The resources available are used profitably, but students need

more opportunities to use ICT on a regular basis. Good wall displays throughout the school celebrate the writing achievements of students of all abilities.

44. The department is very well managed by the skilful head of faculty who has introduced innovative schemes to raise examination results and the achievement of students of all abilities. This foresight has enabled the department to make good improvement since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

45. Provision for developing speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in subjects other than English is good. Effective co-ordination has ensured that teachers from all departments are aware of the importance of teaching communication skills, and this is a strong feature in much of the school's most effective teaching, particularly in history and religious education. Many classrooms have displays of key words for the subject, and teaching in most lessons ensures that they are used well. Teachers in most subjects pay attention to grammar and punctuation in marking, and give students opportunities to speak and listen. Fluency in reading and writing is an important feature of the accelerated learning club, which aims to raise achievement in Year 9 students, but there are weaknesses in students' written work in design and technology. Students have good opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in poetry, drama, public speaking and debating activities.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern languages is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average and long-term achievement is poor.
 - Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall.
 - The curriculum is not meeting the needs of a significant number of students.
 - The attitudes to learning and the behaviour of a substantial minority of students are poor.
 - There are some strengths in teaching and learning, often in top sets and in written work.
 - Teachers and students have too little access to ICT.
46. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average in French and very low in German, although a higher proportion of the students were entered for German than in most schools. Students' performance in French and German is significantly lower than in most of their other GCSE subjects, with boys' performance weaker than girls'. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 11 were similar to the GCSE results. In Year 9, standards were well below average in German, which is only taught after school, but slightly better in French, where they were below average. There are examples of better achievement in some classes, including some good extended writing in Year 8, where students express their opinions in the present, past and future tenses. This strength is carried through to Year 9 in French, but not in German. In some of the top sets in Years 7 to 11, students read and understand well difficult passages of written French and German. Across the school, pronunciation is weak because of insufficient practice, and spontaneous writing and speaking are very inaccurate grammatically.
47. Achievement across the years is poor, and courses do not meet the needs of significant numbers of students. There is a well-planned programme of grammar study, but it is too ambitious for lower-attaining students, who respond with unsatisfactory behaviour and poor attitudes to learning. Higher-attaining students have a fragmented experience of languages: the content of the courses lacks continuity and it does not build up the mastery of complex language structures slowly and steadily. This is partly due to weaknesses in long-term planning and partly due to many changes in staff. Even where staffing is stable, the responsibility for teaching is often split between teachers, and support staff or students in

training may also be involved. As a result, it is difficult to assess in depth the difficulties faced by any one individual, and students struggle to make progress. Students with special educational needs benefit from the extensive support available, and their long-term progress is satisfactory.

48. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall. However, the majority of lessons taught by permanent staff are satisfactory and one good lesson was observed. There are strengths in the teaching. Planning is often good with careful attention paid to the different learning styles that students favour, and a care to match the work to the needs of students, where the latter are adequately diagnosed. Formal assessment once a term is good and usually marked in terms of the levels of the National Curriculum or GCSE grades, so that students know how well they are doing. Day-to-day marking is more variable. Some teaching methods employed are successful, but in many lessons, teachers struggle to find methods which will succeed with disaffected students, who are fully aware of how little they have learned.
49. The acting head of department provides satisfactory leadership but management is unsatisfactory because of staffing difficulties and long-term illness. This is preventing the department from developing effective long-term strategies for improvement, and schemes of work have not been updated to take account of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9. The deployment of staff is unsatisfactory and temporary staff, of which there are several at any one time, are not adequately briefed. There has been a significant decline in standards, teaching and achievement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' strong knowledge of mathematics gains students' respect and co-operation.
- There is a significant proportion of very good teaching.
- Good use of the National Numeracy Strategy has improved standards and learning in Years 7 to 9.
- Some classes do not behave well for teachers who are new to them.
- Teachers use information from assessment well to match work to students' learning needs.
- The department is well led and managed, with very good administrative support.

Commentary

50. Results at GCSE and in Year 9 national tests are broadly average. Year 9 results, however, are improving at an above-average rate, and this was reflected in the above-average standard of work seen during the inspection. Standards in Year 11 during the inspection were average overall, but the achievement of a significant minority of students was affected by poor attendance. There was evidence of improving standards in Year 10. Students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make satisfactory and sometimes better progress, despite very limited additional support. Achievement is good in Year 9, and satisfactory in Year 11.
51. Teachers have very good relationships with their classes and know them well, because they usually keep the same classes through the school. Students respond enthusiastically to questions because they know their thinking will be taken seriously even if the answer is wrong. This emphasis on thinking and discussing ideas is used with all abilities and leads to good understanding of the mathematics. Teachers use strategies like setting a question which 'doesn't work' to start the debate, and then use clever questioning to probe understanding or set up counter-arguments. Students are encouraged to be independent and make choices for

themselves and are often asked to help demonstrate or explain to the rest of the class. All lessons start with an activity which students can begin on arrival. Lesson objectives and key words are on the board and referred to during the lesson. Teachers use humour, songs and visual materials to explain and practise ideas. In all but a few lessons, they have other activities ready in case students struggle or find the planned work too easy.

52. Assessment is good. Most lessons finish with an assessment of students' confidence that they have achieved the objectives, so that the teacher can decide what needs to be done in the next lesson. Year 10 students also fill in a self-assessment sheet at the beginning and end of each topic showing what they knew before and the new knowledge and skills they have acquired. This new system has the potential to be very positive in allowing students to keep track of their own progress.
53. Behaviour is good to very good in about half of lessons. This is because teachers have very high expectations of both work and behaviour and never let standards slip. When the experienced teachers are less vigilant behaviour is still satisfactory. Behaviour is unsatisfactory for new or temporary staff who have not established their standards. Students sometimes refuse to listen to explanations and do not do the work set.
54. The mathematics department staff work effectively as a team. They support each other, jointly plan, share resources and have intervention strategies to counter problems like the under-performance of boys or girls. Teaching, the curriculum and the setting of homework are all closely monitored. Students' progress is tracked so that under-achievement can be recognised and help offered. To improve, the department could increase students' access to computers, develop a bank of worksheets accessible to students with minimal English, and agree extension strategies for especially gifted mathematicians, which might include early entry to GCSE. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department has maintained standards despite the increase in the number of students with special needs and behaviour problems.

Mathematics across the curriculum

55. Students show confidence in using their mathematical skills in other subjects. They analyse graphs and charts successfully, work with compound measures such as speed and flow, and measure accurately in practical subjects. They use spreadsheets in a variety of ways, although some find setting up the formulae quite difficult. Students have a positive attitude to mathematical ideas, as when a lower set in Year 7 remained enthusiastic when faced with the complex ideas and huge numbers involved in a religious education lesson on third world debt.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have built a good sense of teamwork in the department.
- Teachers know their specialist subjects very well and most make good use of national guidance.
- Some teaching is too limited in its scope and challenge, and there are few very high grades at GCSE.
- Assessment strategies are established and the analysis of data is developing well, but some marking is inadequate.
- Standards are just above average, but there are some weaknesses in students' literacy skills.

Commentary

56. Results in Year 9 national tests and at GCSE are slightly above average. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE results over the past four years, and all students gained pass grades at GCSE in 2003, although few achieved very high grades. Girls do very slightly better than boys, reflecting the national picture. The standard of work during the inspection was similar to these examination and test results, though there was some under-achievement in individual classes where teaching was weak. Overall, achievement in science is satisfactory and there is no significant pattern of difference in the standards reached by different groups of students.
57. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The recent introduction of starter activities and final summary sessions, and the wider range of teaching and learning strategies set out in the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 were contributing to effective learning in many lessons. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of their specialist subjects. Thorough and detailed planning by most teachers, together with the effective use of resources and focused questioning, helps many students to do well. Students are keen to speak about their work but their literacy skills are not well developed. The standard of marking and follow-up by teachers varies considerably and, in many students' books, work is missing or incomplete. Some students have a poor attitude to work and enthusiasm is low. In a minority of lessons, there is too little challenge, and too few opportunities for independent and collaborative work. This leads students to become bored, and results in unsatisfactory learning.
58. Leadership and management are good. The acting head of faculty has identified the main areas for improvement and has built a good sense of teamwork among teachers and technicians. He shows exceptional clarity of vision, commitment and high aspirations. Documentation is supportive and of high quality, assessment is regular and well organised, and marking is under review. Five technicians, amounting to only three full-time equivalent staff, make an excellent contribution to the quality of learning for all students. The recently appointed and very effective faculty administrator also supports the department well. Very high staff turnover, particularly in the last two years, has restricted learning. Students' experience is enriched through a range of extra-curricular activities. Overall, the department has shown steady and satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, and has good features that put it in a strong position to improve further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising as a result of good leadership and management in the department.
- Good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 stem from specialist teachers' good knowledge of the subject.
- Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is very thorough and is clearly linked to teaching and learning.
- Vocational and academic courses in Years 10 and 11 meet students' needs well.
- The faculty structure does not enable teaching in Years 7 to 9 to be monitored closely enough.

Commentary

59. The results of teachers' assessments in Year 9 were well below average in 2003. During the inspection, work seen in Years 7 to 9 was of a higher standard but it is still below average. Achievement, however, is satisfactory in view of students' starting points. GCSE and GNVQ examination results were well below average in 2003, when boys performed significantly worse than girls, mainly as a result of their failure to complete coursework. Examination work seen during the inspection in Years 10 to 11 was slightly above average, reflecting the strongly rising standards in the department. The continued provision of GCSE and GNVQ courses for Years 10 to 11 is a strength. The courses meet the needs of all students and enable them to achieve well.
60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Good practice from the national strategy is used such as the emphasis on key words and a review of learning at the end of each lesson. However the tailoring of the individual lessons needs more coordination so as to meet the needs of students better. The well planned school assessment scheme is not used consistently by all teachers. In Years 10 to 11 teaching is by ICT specialists and is never less than good. Teachers' wide subject knowledge is used to provide good illustrative examples that aid learning, and also to challenge and support individuals. Management of students is a strength so behaviour in lessons is good and students respond well when working independently. The on-line GNVQ course provides a good range of learning experiences within a very supportive framework. Assessment of students' work in Years 10 to 11 is thorough and constructive and makes a major contribution to their learning. Students have a good understanding of the level of their work and how they can improve towards their target grade. Higher-attaining students are well catered for in the daily lunchtime computer club; for example, a robotic 'ball-boy' for tennis is in the early stages of development. Students with special educational needs are identified and receive good support, enabling them to achieve well.
61. The ICT department is part of a newly-formed joint faculty with business studies. A strength of this arrangement is the provision of a wide range of sixth form ICT courses, reported separately. A weakness is the unsatisfactory monitoring of the non-specialist teaching in Years 7 to 9. The head of the ICT department has been in post for less than two years and provides a good role model. The head of department's good leadership and management have brought the recent rise in standards despite the difficulties caused by earlier staffing problems. Much has been done to develop teachers' skills and to improve the curriculum, but provision in Years 7 to 9 needs further strengthening and teaching in these year groups needs to be more closely monitored. Resources in the main teaching rooms are good and the school's computer network and Internet access now work reliably after a recent and major upgrade. Technical support is good and the Internet filtering system is well monitored.
62. Since the last inspection a good range of well-taught courses has been introduced into Years 10 to 11, where previously there were none. Resources have been substantially improved and the school now meets government guidelines with one computer for every five students. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good, and there is good capacity for further improvement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. Many subjects now have satisfactory or better access to computers though their use of them is still developing. Most staff participated in the national training scheme but high staff turnover diluted the benefits. Science makes good use of spreadsheets to manipulate and present results while multimedia CDs significantly enhance the teaching of topics such as space science. Science students also gain satisfactory experience of data-capture, the automatic recording, storing and presentation of scientific data such as temperature. Good practice was noted also in mathematics, history, geography, religious education and in vocational subjects but there is insufficient use in modern

foreign languages, design & technology and music. Art has unsatisfactory resources but exploits good links with the ICT department to develop valuable projects on the artists Mondrian and Lichtenstein and also to develop students' appreciation of African art via the school's link with Kenya. The use of ICT for administration is very well developed. There is good access in all departmental areas and the high quality staff intranet records the attainment of every student at each key stage with detailed predictions against which future progress can be evaluated.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership and management have created an imaginative curriculum, first-class assessment, a sense of shared purpose and excellent relationships.
- Standards are above average in all year groups, and GCSE results are very high.
- Very good teaching helps students to develop an interest in history and to achieve very well.
- The history curriculum makes an excellent contribution to students' spiritual and moral development.
- Questioning in a minority of lessons needs to give students more time to think.

Commentary

64. GCSE results are consistently well above average, and most students do better in history than in other subjects. There is a high proportion of A grades. Standards during the inspection were above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. Standards among students joining the school are below average, and achievement among all groups of students, including those with additional learning needs, is very good. This level of achievement is also consistent across the full range of the National Curriculum and in GCSE coursework. Students develop particularly good skills in analysis of cause and effect and in evaluating the usefulness of historical source material.
65. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with many excellent features. Teachers use their expertise and enthusiasm to enable students to understand why it is interesting to be an historian. High expectations and excellent relationships cause lessons to be rigorous and purposeful. As a result, students are confident to ask questions and to explore issues. Probing questioning extends and deepens the thinking of older students. However, questioning of younger students tends to be frequent and too quick, and to confirm what they know rather than cause them to think hard; as a result, lower-attaining students sometimes lose interest. Teachers teach literacy well. Almost all students learn how to select and organise relevant information to produce accurate, structured work. Teachers use ICT and video imaginatively. Students work well independently and make good use of their numeracy skills to build competent, chronological foundations for their work.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent teaching in Year 11 gave students a clear basis for reaching high standards at GCSE while preparing the skills required for advanced historical study.

Teaching by two teachers in Year 11 was based on very clear understanding of history and of patterns in the learning of all students in the year group. Planning, strategies and the detail of learning tasks were designed to build up historical understanding at the highest level students could understand, and to ensure that each student was fully engaged. This involved more detailed structure and a starter activity for lower-attaining students, and more independent evaluation for those capable of very high standards. This approach enabled students of all abilities to focus on key historical issues, such as the causes of World War II and economic issues in the USA in the twenties and thirties. As a result, lower-attaining students built up their understanding of cause and effect and of the use of evidence, while higher-attaining students focused on points of weakness in their analytic skills and examination technique. Both lessons enabled students, including some with behavioural difficulties, to concentrate hard and to evaluate their own and each other's work, with very effective use of a trainee teacher to provide additional support for lower-attaining students. The emphasis on note-making and scrutiny of written sources made an outstanding contribution to literacy skills.

66. Excellent leadership and management have created a powerful department, with high expectations of students, very good teaching and effective teamwork and organisational skills. The careful re-structuring of the curriculum enables adequate teaching time for each topic, particularly in Years 7 to 9. It also allows for the excellent promotion of moral and spiritual development as all topics are based upon a questioning and reflective approach. The fascinating and extensive departmental museum and a wide range of visits also enhance personal development. Teachers monitor students' performance comprehensively and give clear advice about areas for improvement. Marking is of excellent quality. The faculty administrator makes a key contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the department. The high uptake of the subject and the consistently improving examination results reflect the commitment and expertise of those who teach history. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good in all respects.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- GCSE results are well above national averages.
- At present, the school does not provide religious education for all students beyond Year 9.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good with excellent features.
- Students have very positive attitudes in class.
- A very large number of students study the subject at GCSE.
- The department has excellent leadership and management.
- The subject makes excellent provision for the personal development of students.

Commentary

67. Because of cuts in the timetable for the present year, the school is not providing religious education for a significant number of higher-attaining students in Years 10 and 11, although it has plans to compensate for this to some extent by a conference. In all other respects, this is a very good department with outstanding features in its best teaching, and is making a most important contribution to personal development as well as enabling students to reach high standards. In recent GCSE examinations, results have been above, and sometimes well above, the national average; in 2003, a high proportion of students passed with very high grades. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average in Year 9, and well above average in Year 11.

68. During their first three years at the school, students acquire a thorough understanding of Christian beliefs and those of other world religions. They write accurately, and students in Year 9 have produced some very detailed and well-presented essays on spiritual and moral dilemmas. In Years 10 and 11, the large number of students who study the subject for GCSE explore spiritual and moral issues to considerable depth.
69. The quality of teaching is very good. It is sometimes excellent. Concerns were raised in the previous report about insufficient challenge for students and limited teaching strategies in some lessons. This is no longer the case. All lessons are planned very well, with varied activities that support students in their learning. As a result, students are encouraged to become active participants in lessons through debate and discussion and there is a sense of purpose and rigour in the classroom. Teachers use their subject expertise and classroom management skills very well to promote students' understanding of the various topics. As a result, students thoroughly enjoy their studies. They have very positive attitudes and show respect for their teachers and for each other. They are keen to air their views and always do their best.
70. The department has excellent leadership and management. There are clear plans for further development and assessment is now used very well to monitor students' progress. ICT is playing an increasing role as a departmental resource and there are ample visits to places of religious interest to enhance the curriculum. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all students, especially in the area of multicultural understanding. Overall, the department has made very good progress since the previous inspection. It is a very popular subject and has a dedicated and very strong teaching team. It is a considerable strength to the school and the key issue now is the provision of religious education for all students beyond Year 9.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of work in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection was above average.
- Students make good progress in lessons where there is effective planning and confident teaching.
- Assessment procedures at the end of Year 9 do not fully detect high achievement.
- The most successful lessons are where teachers provide materials to suit the wide range of abilities in the group.
- Geography makes good contributions to numeracy, particularly in graphs and data handling.
- There is knowledgeable and purposeful leadership of the curriculum.

Commentary

71. 2003 GCSE results were average, but the quality of work in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection was above average. The standard of students' work during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 was average, although teachers' assessments recorded well below average standards in 2003. This is because assessment tasks did not identify the higher levels effectively. Across the school, students' geographical skills are developing well, and achievement is good among all groups of students. Geography makes a good contribution to numeracy skills. Students have produced good quality graphs such as climate graphs and population pyramids as well as maps and diagrams, which they analyse to explain geographical patterns. This has been shared with the whole school as an example of good practice.
72. Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes very good. Teachers know the subject well, manage question-and-answer and discussion sessions effectively and, in most lessons, produce resources that meet the needs of all students in the class. However, additional

resources are more often provided for lower-attaining students than for those capable of very high standards. Where the teaching is very good, students become engrossed in their learning and made very good progress, for example, in discussing a wide range of issues related to water pollution in Year 7. The choice of themes in geography often makes a significant contribution to students' understanding of citizenship issues, though these are not always specifically identified. Teaching assistants are well directed and productive.

73. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Students' work is helpfully assessed and marked, but many students do not know which National Curriculum level they are working at. Assessments are still not used to set targets, there is no assessment of students on entry to the school, and there is too little moderation of assessment at the end of Year 9. A new, less theoretical GCSE syllabus has recently been introduced, and the department is providing additional revision sessions outside the school day for students aiming at A and A* grades at GCSE, and coursework catch-up sessions for those with borderline grades.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very effective.
- Standards are below the national average.
- Assessment, monitoring and recording of students' progress are very good.
- Designing and making in some aspects of the subject need improvement.

Commentary

74. Standards among students joining the school are below average overall, particularly among the boys. At the end of Year 9, standards remain lower than in most schools, but the new schemes of work are beginning to have a positive impact. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Nearly eight out of ten students take the subject in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results were below average in 2003. They were best in food technology. Girls continued to perform significantly better than boys in all years. The standard of work seen during the inspection was below average, but represents satisfactory achievement from students' starting points.
75. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and good in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are planned and practical tasks demonstrated effectively, and students are effectively challenged by a good range of practical tasks. Teachers in Years 7 to 9 involve students well by asking them questions in lessons and holding good whole-class discussions. As a result, attitudes are normally positive. However, students in Years 10 and 11 are sometimes allowed to work at too slow a pace, and there is poor attendance in some classes, chiefly among lower-attaining students who have finished their coursework. Across the department, there is too little attention to developing literacy skills in students' written work, and too little use of ICT. However, students' work is closely assessed, monitored and recorded. Some parents provide good support to teachers in textile lessons.
76. Standards, teaching and learning have been affected by recent very high turnover of staff, and the school's satisfactory provision is the result of very effective leadership and management in particularly difficult circumstances. The new head of curriculum area is very committed to improving standards and has the full support of his colleagues. He provides support to new teachers, several of whom are awaiting qualified teacher status. He has improved schemes of work and assessment in Years 7 to 9 and enlarged the curriculum to include textiles and

product design in Years 10 and 11. As a result, changes since the last inspection are satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected fully. Drama was sampled by observing lessons in Years 7 and 11 and by analysing the department's planning and examination results.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good, sometimes outstanding.
- There are very good systems of assessment to support learning.
- There are very positive attitudes and good behaviour.
- Resources for ICT need further development.
- Opportunities to challenge gifted and talented students need further planning.

Commentary

77. Students join the school with below average standards. They reach broadly average standards in Year 9 and significantly above average standards in Year 11. GCSE results in 2003 were above average and showed an improvement on the good results maintained during recent years. Students with special educational needs are well integrated and make good progress in all years. Gifted and talented students make good progress, but could be more effectively challenged in a minority of lessons. Standards in some aspects of art and design are held back by limited access to ICT, but students make good progress in their literacy skills.
78. Teaching and learning are very good, and on occasions outstanding. Teachers know the subject well, and have very high expectations of students, which they translate into engaging, colourful and relevant tasks. Planning is very thorough, and teachers ensure that the limited time available is used well by setting work out in advance. Lessons have very good pace, and relationships and students' attitudes are very good. Assessment procedures are varied, very helpful and particularly effective in Years 10 and 11, though information from them could sometimes be used more effectively to challenge gifted and talented students. Regular target-setting helps students to improve their work, and there is effective, regular and well-marked homework. Art and design makes a good contribution to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. It also contributes well to the ethos of the school through the range of good displays in art rooms and public areas.
79. Very good leadership and management have created strong teamwork among a group of teachers with diverse, but complementary, skills. The high standards seen during the last inspection have been very effectively built on, and overall improvement has been very good.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent preparation and planning, combined with purposeful relationships developed over the year, led to a wide range of outstanding work in a single lesson in Year 8, based on students' interpretation of The Day of The Triffids.

Students streamed in with a sense of urgency. Tables were fully prepared with work and resources by a teacher determined to make best possible use of a single lesson. A range of probing questions tested students' knowledge, understanding and retention of work so far, and ensured that they knew and could explain exactly what they had to do. The teacher held up examples of good work, and modelled techniques from which students could choose. As students worked, further praise, encouragement and questioning reinforced the teaching points and kept them all focused. By the end of the lesson, they had produced a wide range of interpretations of the story, combining collage and colour with a wide variety of drawing skills. Students' excellent work rate and the teacher's very effective time management left good time for a concluding session in which all students were fully involved in evaluating their own and each other's work. Students told the inspector how much they appreciated the teacher's work in extending their enjoyment of the subject as well as improving their skills.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in the GCSE course, but below average in Year 9.
- There is too little teaching time in Years 7 to 9 to allow the National Curriculum to be fully taught.
- Teaching, learning, leadership and management are very good.
- There are very good opportunities for learning outside lessons, but these need to involve more students.
- There is too little use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

80. The school has only one music teacher, and this does not permit classes in Years 7 to 9 to have enough lessons to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. As a result, standards in Year 9 are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory, despite the very good quality of teaching and learning in lessons. Recent GCSE results have been below average, but the high quality of teaching has resulted in above-average standards and good achievement in the GCSE course during the inspection. An extensive and very well organised programme of learning outside lessons makes an important contribution to the achievement of gifted and talented students, whose long-term achievement is good.
81. All teaching seen during the inspection, in and out of lessons, was very good. The head of department has outstanding knowledge and understanding of the subject, and plans very effectively to ensure that students learn as much as possible despite the inadequate time for the subject. Lessons are presented with energy and enthusiasm, making very effective use of time and available resources. Nevertheless, long intervals between lessons make it very difficult for her to ensure that all students take sufficient responsibility for their own learning. Continuous assessment, formal assessment and feedback are good and so the students know how well they are doing and how to do better: however, if students miss assessments through absence there is no time available for them to complete them. There is some use of ICT, but its potential is not fully realised, as there is too little access to equipment. The school received a donation of ten new computers equipped with music software between the inspection and the publication of this report.
82. The newly appointed head of department provides very good leadership and management. She has a clear practical vision of what is possible in the circumstances, and departmental planning is reflective, innovative and clear-thinking. The department provides very good opportunities for learning out of lessons with as wide a range of activities, performances, workshops and trips

as the head of music has time to organise and deliver; this makes a valuable contribution to the life and the ethos of the school, although the number of students participating needs to be increased.

83. The department has experienced considerable disruption since the last inspection, particularly in staffing. As a result, it has made too little progress since the last inspection. The high level of skills and professionalism of the head of department, however, put it in a very good position to develop its work to a very high standard if it can be adequately staffed.

Drama

84. Work sampled in drama was very good. Very good teaching stimulates students to think for themselves as they develop their own ideas and devise their improvisations. These are based on exploring stories, topical issues and social problems, an approach that contributes to students' personal development and to some aspects of citizenship; these are sometimes, but not always, specifically identified to students as citizenship. Students work collaboratively and sustain concentration to an unusually high level because they are committed within their characterisations to solving the problems which their group has decided to tackle. The highly skilled drama teacher allows students flexibility to grow in understanding as they develop the drama skills necessary for performance to an audience. Students develop confidence, skill and expertise as they progress through a range of drama processes to achieve a very high standard. The quality of students' written work does not equal their practical performance because students prefer the practical elements of the course. However, the drama teacher is introducing innovative schemes to counter students' reluctance for writing about their drama experiences. Extra-curricular activities, school plays and visits of theatre-in-education groups, such as the Globe Theatre performance of 'Macbeth', which was observed during the inspection, all enrich students' learning experiences. GCSE results are above average.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers set and obtain high standards of work and behaviour.
- Students have a positive and lively attitude towards physical education, and make good progress.
- There is good provision for extra-curricular activities.
- The department is led and managed well.

Commentary

85. Students arrive at the school with below-average standards overall. By the end of Year 9, they reach broadly average standards. GCSE results were slightly below average in 2003, but this represented an improvement on results in recent years. The standard of work during the inspection showed considerable improvement on this. It was average overall, with several able students performing at the highest levels. Students with special educational needs are well integrated and given much support and encouragement from both staff and students and reach levels of attainment that are commendable for them. Overall, standards across a wide range of activities represent good achievement from students' starting points.
86. Teaching and learning are good. All lessons begin and end in an orderly manner with objectives being clearly stated and understood by the students. Lessons are well organised and conducted at a brisk demanding pace with a series of tasks that promote a high level of interest and effort, and enable all students to make progress. Students respond very positively. They are enthusiastic, their participation rate is good and their behaviour is generally good.

Their enjoyment of the lessons is very evident. Many staff give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are very well supported by enthusiastic groups of students. Students are also able to undertake a range of tasks including acting as officials, referees and coaches.

87. Leadership and management are good. The head of department was appointed in September 2002, and has had a very positive impact on the work and organization of the department. New schemes of work and other documentation have been revised and are helping in the delivery of the subject. She provides a very good role model for the department. Teachers combine well as a team, sharing a commitment to the improvement of the department, and support each other very well. Since the last inspection good progress has been made. There has been an overall improvement in the quality of teaching and in standards throughout the school.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

88. No subjects were fully inspected. Courses in child development, business studies, leisure and tourism, childcare and construction were sampled by observing lessons and sampling students' work. The construction and childcare courses were sampled during a visit to Northeast Surrey College of Technology (NESCOT). The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory overall. It was good in lessons seen at NESCOT, which were well adapted to the needs of the students, several of whom had been at risk of exclusion. Teaching and learning were also good in the leisure and tourism lesson seen and in students' folders of work. Teaching and learning in business studies during the inspection were satisfactory overall, but their quality in individual lessons ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. The most recent GCSE results in business studies were above average.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

89. Personal, social and health education was sampled extensively by observing lessons in each year group, and citizenship was inspected fully.

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school does not meet statutory requirements for planned citizenship.
- There are no procedures at present for assessing, recording and reporting the subject.
- Some citizenship issues are taught very well, for example, in drama and religious education lessons.
- Some subjects do not plan for citizenship opportunities in their schemes of work.
- There are good opportunities for students to participate and to take responsibility.

Commentary

90. A member of the senior management team has very recently taken over responsibility for citizenship following the long-term absence of a co-ordinator. This has made an immediate impact on improving provision for citizenship in the school, and citizenship features strongly in plans to restructure the curriculum for the next academic year. Nevertheless, provision is still at the early stage of development and does not meet statutory requirements.
91. Citizenship issues are currently being addressed through subjects and a citizenship strand in the personal, social and health education programme. It is not possible to reach an overall judgement on standards and achievement as few lessons were observed during the inspection that had a distinct focus on citizenship and there is little written work in the subject. However, in

lessons observed where citizenship was planned for and identified, students exhibited a good understanding of issues within society. These included investigation of socially acceptable behaviour in Year 8 drama, and the nature of power in Year 7 religious education. Students have good opportunities to participate and take responsible action throughout the school. The school council is an effective channel of communication between staff and students and has been involved in a number of fundraising activities. Year 11 prefects act as mentors in Year 7 form groups and help with preparing assemblies and anti-bullying initiatives.

92. An audit of citizenship provision has been carried out, and opportunities for the subject are clearly incorporated into schemes of work in some departments, such as humanities, music and drama. Other departments, however, have yet to do this, and there are as yet no procedures for assessing, recording and reporting students' work. There are clear plans to address all these important issues noted above but, at present, provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory and the introduction of the subject has been too slow.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	75.0	80.1	0	23.7	22.5	29.9
Business studies	5	100	76.4	100	16.3	52.0	26.2
Communication studies	3	100	86.4	0	23.8	30.0	32.0
Drama	2	100	86.5	0	19.6	35.0	30.6
Economics	1	0	73.6	0	20.1	0	26.4
English/English language	4	50.0	82.9	0	17.5	12.5	28.7
French	2	100	78.2	0	18.9	20.0	27.6
Design and technology	1	100	74.9	0	15.1	20.0	25.3
General studies	52	100	73.9	28.8	17.8	38.1	25.7
Geography	4	100	74.3	25.0	19.8	32.5	26.5
History	1	75.0	80.7	0	19.5	40.0	28.6
Information technology	4	100	67.0	0	10.9	17.5	21.4
Mathematics	4	100	61.9	100	17.1	22.5	22.1
Other languages	1	0	82.6	0	42.9	0	36.2
Physics	1	100	68.6	100	14.4	50.0	22.7
Religious studies	4	100	80.2	0	22.6	32.5	29.8
Sociology	1	100	71.8	0	18.4	30.0	25.4
Sports/PE studies	1	100	73.2	0	11.4	20.0	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	7	85.7	98.6	28.6	50.2	62.9	87.5
Biology	9	100	96.4	33.3	39.2	71.1	78.6
Business studies	9	100	98.7	55.6	36.8	88.9	80.1
Chemistry	1	0	97.6	0	49.0	0	84.9
Communication studies	3	100	99.4	66.7	37.8	93.3	82.1
Drama	3	100	99.5	0	40.1	66.7	83.6
Economics	2	100	98.9	50.0	52.0	80.0	88.3
English/English Language	12	91.7	99.4	8.3	36.3	61.7	80.9
English Literature	4	100	99.5	0	46.5	55.0	86.5
French	1	100	98.8	100	51.5	100	87.6
Design and technology	9	100	97.8	11.1	35.0	62.2	77.9
General Studies	13	84.6	94.7	7.7	31.0	53.8	73.1
Geography	16	100	98.7	37.5	44.5	82.5	84.0
German	1	100	98.4	100	47.9	100	84.8
History	16	100	99.0	43.8	44.6	83.8	84.6
Information Technology	20	100	95.6	15.0	24.6	65.0	69.5
Mathematics	8	100	96.7	37.5	55.6	77.5	88.8
Music	2	50.0	98.8	0	38.9	20.0	81.1
Other social studies	1	100	97.4	0	42.7	60.0	81.8
Physics	6	66.7	97.7	0	44.6	33.3	81.7
Religious studies	11	100	98.8	18.2	46.7	72.7	85.6
Sports/PE studies	7	100	98.0	14.2	30.9	57.1	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department leads a team of committed teachers who share her vision.
- Standards are improving and students have increased confidence in the department.
- Some of the texts studied do not sufficiently challenge the abler students.
- Students are not given enough practice in writing essays.

Commentary

93. The A-level results in 2003 were below average in English Literature and the English Language and Literature examinations, whereas results at the time of the last inspection were in line with the national average. Few students passed with A and B grades, but boys' and girls' attainment was broadly similar. Year 13 students who retook part of the examination in 2004 raised their grades considerably. Standards in work during the inspection were broadly average, however, and overall achievement is satisfactory. The number of students studying English has risen significantly since the last inspection.
94. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan lessons well to ensure that the syllabus is fully covered and provide students with guidance in acquiring skills in research and analysis. In the best lessons, skilful questioning enables students to master difficult ideas. However, in some lessons the pace of learning is slow and students are not sufficiently encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Abler students are not sufficiently challenged by some undemanding texts chosen for study, and this limits their chances of reaching the highest grades. In marking essays, teachers give students encouragement and, in the best examples, guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. Marking does not consistently make clear to students how well they are progressing in relation to national standards.
95. Leadership and management are good. The head of department leads a committed team who share her aspirations for the development of sixth-form teaching. She has put in place programmes for raising standards, which are beginning to show their effectiveness in the improvement in grades among students retaking examinations.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

96. Provision is good across the sixth form. Students are encouraged to express their ideas in correct English and to discuss ideas at a high level. Important subject-specific words are displayed in most classrooms. Students are encouraged to participate in pair and group activities and to contribute to class discussions. In the best practice, such as that found in biology, business education and history, students focus on important technical words and learn to apply them correctly. In subjects where some students have weak literacy skills, such as health and social care, teachers' focus on developing fluency in reading and writing results in good progress in the subject as well as in literacy.

Modern foreign languages

97. German was sampled in Year 13. One lesson was observed, taught by a visiting advanced skills teacher. The quality of teaching and learning was outstanding. Difficult grammatical structures, for example the passive mode in four different tenses, were taught in an innovative and highly effective way and achievement was excellent. As the school has been unable to

recruit a German teacher, students are enrolled on a distance-learning programme. In view of the level of additional support provided in school, this arrangement is satisfactory.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know the subject well and foster good relationships and attitudes to work.
- Standards are below average, but represent satisfactory achievement from students' starting points.
- The sharing of teaching between two teachers makes for a lack of continuity in learning.
- Assessment does not ensure that work is consistently matched to all students' needs.
- Teaching groups are very small.

Commentary

98. The number of students taking languages is very small. All three examination candidates passed in 2003, but numbers are too small to make valid national comparisons. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well below average in Year 12. Year 12 students speak confidently, but their pronunciation is poor, listening skills are below average, and written work contains many basic errors. In Year 13, standards are below average. Pronunciation shows some improvement and the standards in coursework are average. Overall, achievement is satisfactory from students' starting points.
99. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and it has good features. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject: both teachers observed were native speakers. Relationships are good: warm and humorous. Teachers plan their lessons well with a good variety of activities and interesting and topical resources. There are high expectations of accuracy and a challenging grammar programme. For some students, the challenge is too high and they struggle to overcome their basic weaknesses. The responsibility for groups is split between teachers, but the needs of most of the students cannot be fully assessed and attended to with the fragmented teaching which results from this arrangement. The behaviour and attitudes of the students are a strength and they persevere despite the difficulties of the courses.
100. The acting head of department provides satisfactory leadership and management. She achieves smooth day-to-day running of the subject, and is beginning to address weaknesses in long-term provision.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Rigorous teaching leads to very good learning and achievement.
- Standards are below average, but there is a high pass rate.
- Students work very well together.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

101. A-level results were below average in 2003, but all students passed, and three achieved grade A or B. All four students taking AS-level in 2003 achieved a pass grade. Standards of work seen during the inspection showed improvement on this performance, and were above average. The overall pattern of achievement is very good.
102. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students take pride in their work and organise their notes methodically. Students in Year 12 build effectively on their GCSE results and cope well with the demands of the AS-level course. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics and the requirements of the various courses are very good. Teaching is rigorous with careful attention paid to the teaching of mathematical principles. Teachers use questioning effectively to ascertain and develop students' understanding. However, teachers have too little access to ICT to make effective use of it in lessons.
103. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and work very effectively as a team. Ideas and resources are shared. The teachers' considerable experience and expertise are used well to plan and deliver stimulating lessons.

Mathematics across the curriculum

104. Provision is satisfactory. Subjects where mathematics can make a contribution, chiefly information technology, business studies and geography, encourage students to use and analyse data effectively.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good overall, and resources are used effectively.
- Students are very positive about the course and they work well independently and collaboratively.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and the planning of lessons is very good.
- The assessment of students' work is good and is used effectively to support learning.
- Links with other institutions and opportunities for extra-curricular activity in biology are not well developed.

Commentary

105. A-level results have been a little above average in recent years, with a very high pass rate, although few have yet passed with A and B grades. The standard of work seen during the inspection was better than these results, and was clearly above average. Current achievement is good and standards during the inspection indicate that it is improving further. There has been a recent increase in the number of students, and a high proportion of students taking AS continue to A-level.
106. The quality of teaching is very good. There is a good range of teaching strategies and levels of challenge and expectation are high and realistic. Lesson planning and laboratory organisation are very well done, resources are used effectively, and the frequent use of focused discussion helps students to learn. Teachers' enthusiasm is reflected in the positive attitude and high quality of work of students in both year groups and they work well individually and collaboratively.

107. Leadership and management are good. There is a keen sense of common purpose and teachers and technicians have an excellent knowledge and understanding of biology. They encourage very high standards of commitment and behaviour and students respond very well to this. Guided and monitored by staff, they produce well-organised folders that contain detailed and useful notes. Teachers are very positive role models and their enthusiasm is reflected in the attitude and work of students in both year groups. Biology is very popular with students and attitudes are positive.
108. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in the way biology is organised and taught. Schemes of work have been revised and rewritten and assessment is effective and supports learning well. There are opportunities for revision and it is hoped to include residential field-work at a later date. However, links with other institutions are not well developed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good range of courses available meets the needs of a broad spectrum of students.
- The good subject knowledge of teachers contributes strongly to the good teaching.
- Assessment is very good and enhances students' understanding of their learning.
- Teachers and students enjoy good working relationships.

Commentary

109. A-level entries increased substantially in 2003, and results were a little below average. The standard of work in Years 12 and 13 during the inspection was slightly above average but with a wide spread of attainment. The department operates an inclusive recruitment policy so that even students with modest GCSE grades are given the opportunity to start the AS course. Students' generally positive attitudes supported by good teaching enable the great majority of them to achieve well.
110. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to challenge and support individuals. Both the AS and the A-level courses are well structured with a supportive framework of good resources. Students following a vocational pathway are well catered for though the courses are also available to other students as enrichment activities. The one-year GNVQ intermediate course has the same well-planned on-line format as for Years 10 to 11 and provides a good range of learning experiences within a very supportive framework that is appreciated by students. Detailed and constructive assessment ensures that students understand both the level at which they are working and what aspects they need to improve in order to progress towards their target grade. All students appreciated that conditions for their learning are good and that with good personal effort they would achieve well.
111. Students' learning is closely monitored and assessed so that they mostly achieve well and reach the expected standard. For a few students, timetable clashes mean that they cannot attend about one fifth of the lessons. The department of business studies offers a good range of individual learning courses to improve students' skills and confidence in specific ICT areas useful in commerce and elsewhere. Included, for example, are keyboard skills, word processing, desktop publishing, the use of spreadsheets, databases and the internet. Students, mostly females, are well motivated and take responsibility for their own flexible learning programme. Teacher support is very good with detailed monitoring and assessment. Students achieve well.

112. Leadership and management are good. As a result of the training that they have received, staff have a good knowledge of complex course requirements which enables them to provide the detailed guidance and support needed for students to achieve well, often from a below-average starting point. Accommodation and resources are generally good though higher attaining A-level students would benefit from more advanced software such as that used in web page authoring. Good management has helped minimise the effects of recent staff changes and maximise the impact of different staff skills. The experienced head of department covers all the demanding coursework supervision and assessment, with less experienced teachers well deployed on specific theory topics. As a result, teaching and learning are normally good and sometimes very good. Discussion with students showed that they welcome this arrangement as an aid to their progress. Relationships between teachers and students are good so that the working atmosphere in class is informal yet productive.
113. The last inspection did not comment in detail on sixth form ICT, but the school's current provision of a broad spectrum of high quality, well-taught courses for students across the ability and interest range represents substantial improvement. The recent expansion of the school's ICT facilities enables greater numbers of students to access the courses, and it is in a very good position to improve standards further.

Information technology across the curriculum

114. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is satisfactory, but there is considerable variation between departments. Students generally show good skill and confidence in using computers and much good use is made of internet research, word processing and spreadsheets to develop and present coursework. Business studies and leisure & tourism students use ICT frequently in class and other good practice was seen in history, geography, religious education and physical education. The best practice was seen in film studies where students import digital video scenes to a computer then use high quality software to edit their work and overlay original soundtracks to give a high standard of finished work.

HUMANITIES

History was fully inspected. Two lessons each were observed in geography and religious studies, and students' written work was sampled. The teaching and learning seen in religious studies were very good, and standards ranged from average to above average, representing very good achievement. Geography written work was of above-average quality, and showed good depth of understanding and effective use of data. There was evidence of teaching that made students think hard, leading to good achievement.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average and achievement is very good.
 - Teachers have both an excellent knowledge of the subject and an infectious enthusiasm, which transmits itself to students.
 - Excellent leadership brings the best from teachers and gives students the confidence and motivation to try their hardest.
115. The most recent A-level results were average. All students completed their course with a pass grade or better and most had better results in history than in their other subjects. There were no significant differences in the results obtained by different groups of students. The standard of work during the inspection was above average in Years 12 and 13. Overall, achievement is very good, and there are no significant differences in the standards reached by different groups

of students. Students are able to assess well the significance of events, individuals such as Bismarck and Cromwell, and how ideas and beliefs influenced behaviour and action. Their written work and discussions show that they can present a case in debate and draw up an account. They understand that historians interpret the same events in different ways and most are familiar with the major lines of historiography.

116. Teaching is very good with some excellent features. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and convey a sense of enthusiasm. This leads to students readily grasping historical ideas. Teachers support the students' development as historians in their respect for evidence and their ability to pose historical questions and to think historically. Students learn very well. They know how to discuss issues from different perspectives because of the teachers' planning and organisation. As a result of a skilfully presented curriculum, students show a sharp interest and work productively, and enhance their understanding of citizenship and their cultural awareness.
117. Leadership and management are excellent. There is a clear link between the overall departmental strategy to maintain and, if possible, to improve standards and the structures to support it. Thus, the sequencing of topics and themes and the meticulous planning and organisation of lessons make a significant contribution to teaching and learning. These are supplemented by the departmental help arrangements, which offer excellent out-of-school support. The relative performance of all students is monitored carefully and the departmental overview of student progress is comprehensive. The spacious and well-appointed accommodation facilitates the sharing of ideas and good practice in teaching.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Media studies

Provision for media studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- 'Hands on' experience of technical equipment leads to very good practical work.
- A-level students do not analyse media sufficiently to develop clear understanding of key media concepts.
- Students do not understand media terminology well enough to evaluate key issues.
- Results obtained in AS examinations are good.

Commentary

118. Media Studies courses provide opportunities for students at all levels of ability to achieve well. Several students obtained top grades in the AS level examinations in 2003 and a high proportion of students complete their courses. The first A-level examinations will take place in 2004. Students in both year groups study the concepts underlying magazine production, types of representation, target audiences and the appeal of advertisements. However, their critical skills are less well developed because they do not evaluate sufficiently the power of the media to influence the political, social and moral decisions that are made as a result of the media impact on a variety of audiences.
119. The quality of practical work for individual productions at both AS and A level is very good, and some students reach near-professional standards. Students explain the techniques involved, difficulties encountered and the strategies used to overcome their problems. However, this confidence in critical research is not sustained in other areas of the course and students need to re-apply the discourse skills developed through explanations of their practical work. Overall, theoretical study and practical experimentation are not sufficiently integrated throughout all areas of the course.

120. Teaching is satisfactory overall and very good for the practical components of the course. The quality of support and advice which students receive while preparing their production units is very good. As a result students respond eagerly and work productively to achieve some good results. However, this high quality learning is not sustained consistently across all areas of the course because a significant proportion of students, particularly those on the A-level course, do not have enough opportunities to evaluate critically a wide range of media material and estimate its impact on a variety of audiences. Students understand technical language related to media, but do not use it fluently enough in their work because they have too little practice. This limits some students' achievement at A-level.
121. The subject leader has established media studies courses successfully for the sixth form and is well supported by a skilful teacher who is proficient in meeting the practical demands of the subject. Both teachers have a clear vision for extending provision and would benefit from senior management advice on ways to rationalise the schemes of work, particularly for the A-level course. To improve further, students need to develop a sharper cutting edge to their critical awareness of the power of a wide range of mass media and its impact on society.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are well adapted to students' needs.
- Students of all abilities are achieving well.
- There is good accommodation with immediate access to ICT facilities.
- Students' written work contains too many inaccuracies.
- The number of students is increasing, but needs to be increased further.

Commentary

122. The very small number of students taking GNVQ and AVCE in 2003 passed with average overall standards. A larger group of students began the intermediate GNVQ course in September 2003. Inspection evidence indicates that these students are working well and producing work that is in line with that achieved nationally. Most of the students possess low grade GCSEs and, from this base, achievement is good. At the time of the inspection, a Year 13 student was reaching the end of the two-year Advanced Vocational Certificate course. He is working very well, making good progress and is working at an above-average standard.
123. Students are enthusiastic about the courses, and readily join in class discussions, with most of them able to make informed and perceptive comment regarding the tourist industry. They are beginning to develop research skills, and the higher-attaining students are able to demonstrate critical analysis of information. Students are able to articulate their views with clarity and conviction, but their written work is often spoilt by weaknesses in spelling, presentation and grammar.
124. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and students are responding very positively. Lessons are well planned and make good use of a variety of activities including question and answer sessions, group work and role-play. Teachers are constantly challenging the understanding of the students and, in oral work, draw answers out through careful questioning. Visits to local leisure and tourist locations including Chessington World of Adventures, the local authority leisure centre in Banstead, and a local commercially run fitness centre make important contributions to the students' learning. There is now a need

to extend the students' experience of the leisure and tourist industry beyond the immediate locality. Teachers plan and sequence their lessons well, with many having a practical focus that enables students to sustain interest and motivation. Their sensitive treatment of students leads to good relationships and achievement in terms of students' understanding of the subject, but more attention is needed to developing literacy skills.

125. Leadership and management are good. There is clear long-term planning, and good systems for assessing and tracking progress keep students aware of the level at which they are working and what they most need to improve. Accommodation is good and there is good access to computer equipment which students use very competently. The good quality of the course is reflected in the increasing number of students taking it, and it is extending the range of vocational opportunities in the area. Nevertheless, numbers are still too small to provide satisfactory value for money from the provision, and it is important to raise them further. The course was not offered at the time of the last inspection.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are well above average.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good.
- Students' attitudes are very positive.
- The curriculum does not provide courses for lower-attaining students.
- Teaching groups are very small.

Commentary

126. About one in ten students across the whole sixth form take the subject, and most begin with above-average GCSE grades. In 2003, the results of the A-level examinations in business studies were well above the national average. Female students performed better than male students. Small numbers of students take the AS-level award in business studies as an additional qualification in both Years 12 and 13 and do not progress to the full A-level award. In 2003, the examination results obtained by these students were high compared with the national average. All students obtained A – B grades. Standards in the lessons seen were good overall. Achievement is generally good.
127. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers have very secure knowledge of the subject. All lessons are well planned and topics are introduced well. Teachers hold good whole-class discussions and emphasise key word and concepts well. Course materials and visual aids are good. Relationships in lessons are very good. As a result, students' attitudes are very positive. ICT is used well to research topics, analyse data and present work. On a small number of occasions, the teachers' attention was too focused on the needs of the most able students. More comments on students' work are needed to help them improve further. Courses at level 2 are needed to cater for less-able students by providing a different style of learning.
128. Leadership and management are good. Both the newly-appointed head of the curriculum area and her colleague are very experienced and work well together. Both are enthusiastic and keen to improve standards. Changes since the last inspection are satisfactory. Standards, progress and students' attitude have been maintained.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision in health and social care is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to good achievement by students.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work.
- Students use local care settings very well to enrich work.
- Students' use of ICT is limited, as it is not readily available in lessons.

Commentary

129. Standards are in line with the national average for intermediate GNVQ courses. Students begin the course with below-average GCSE results, and achieve well in lessons and course work. In 2003, the very small class of two students passed the GNVQ course, one at foundation level and one at intermediate, gaining a merit grade. Numbers have increased significantly this year. Most of the ten students have passed one of the two external tests, one with distinction. They are making good progress and reaching broadly average standards for the course.
130. Students' good achievement is evidenced by well-presented coursework assignments in which they research the roles of workers in local care settings, and describe the need for confidentiality. Work shows a sound understanding of risks to health, and attractive posters highlight the dangers of smoking and unsafe sex. Students understand dietary reference values and energy value of foods. Their below-average numeracy and literacy skills on entry show significant improvement through calculating dietary intakes, which most find difficult, and writing reports to recommend changes in diets. Students use ICT well to present course work assignments, but not enough to analyse components of diets, as ICT is not readily available in lessons.
131. Teaching and learning are good, with several very good features. The relationship between teachers and the small group of students is very close, which helps students acquire very good attitudes to work. Teachers' lessons plans are very detailed, and the marking and monitoring of individual students' progress is very effective. Those with special educational needs make very good progress, stimulated by teachers' lively, well-focused discussion and interesting activities. Higher-attaining students are encouraged to develop analytical skills and are sometimes, though not always, given extra units of work. Nearly all students help teachers in lessons in local primary schools during placements one day a week. This gives them sound knowledge about children's developmental stages and enables them to acquire good team-working skills. Students enjoy the course very much and support each other exceptionally well.
132. The course is well led and managed by an experienced science teacher who has a very good understanding of GNVQ assessment requirements. Schemes of work are good, although the effectiveness of teaching and learning is sometimes reduced because some students have timetable clashes. The subject was not previously inspected. It has good capacity for further improvement through plans for more availability and use of ICT, and developing students' evaluation, presentational and numeracy skills.

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

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