

INSPECTION REPORT

THE GRANGE SCHOOL

Aylesbury

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110488

Acting Headteacher: Mr P Mitchell

Lead inspector: Mr J Bald

Dates of inspection: 10th to 13th May 2004

Inspection number: 264422

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary modern school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1323
School address:	Wendover Way Aylesbury Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP21 7NH
Telephone number:	01296 390900
Fax number:	01296 390991
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Morrey
Date of previous inspection:	May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Grange School is a large secondary modern school serving a home counties town some fifty miles from London. Of its 1323 students, 146 are in the sixth form. There are roughly ten per cent more boys than girls in the main school, and the school population is stable. The school has, however, undergone a substantial increase in numbers due to reorganisation since the last inspection, with little expansion to its accommodation. Just over four-fifths of pupils are White, and the remainder come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A sixth of pupils do not have English as their home language, but only a very few are in the early stages of learning English. An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs, but the proportion with a Statement of special educational needs is well above average. A significant minority of pupils have behavioural difficulties. The standards reached by pupils joining the school range from above average to very low for their age; overall, they are below average. The social and economic circumstances of the school are average. At the time of the inspection, the school was led by a very recently appointed acting headteacher.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17932	John Bald	Lead inspector	Health and social care (sixth form)
12682	Jim Griffin	Lay inspector	
12499	Marie Durkin	Team inspector	English (main school)
33711	Michael Hird	Team inspector	Mathematics
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Science
1782	Andrew Lyons	Team inspector	Design and technology; English as an additional language
2048	Doug Masterton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
32115	John Foster	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
4223	Garth Collard	Team inspector	History
8632	Derrick Beer	Team inspector	Geography
20913	Nick McKemey	Team inspector	Art and design
31673	John Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music, citizenship
33164	Debbie Priest	Team inspector	Physical education
8096	Nigel File	Team inspector	Religious education
1249	Joe Edge	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form); special educational needs
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	English (sixth form)
27407	Bill Stoneham	Team inspector	Business studies (main school)
13623	Jim Waddington	Team inspector	Business studies, history (sixth form)

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are below average. Overall, achievement in work seen during the inspection was satisfactory, but some pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve less than they should, and most boys achieve less than girls. Chiefly because of staffing difficulties, teaching and learning in the main school are unsatisfactory. Most pupils work hard and behave well, but the very poor behaviour of a minority is not kept in check. Weak literacy skills are also a barrier to achievement, and there are significant gaps in the curriculum. Governors and the newly-appointed acting headteacher are beginning to take effective action, and leadership and management are satisfactory. The cost per pupil is low, but the school is not providing satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most pupils in the main school and sixth form have positive attitudes to school and work hard.
- Some pupils' serious misbehaviour disrupts learning and threatens other pupils' well-being.
- The acting headteacher provides clear direction for the school and good management.
- Skilled teaching by permanent staff brings the best out of pupils in their classes, but teaching is unsatisfactory in almost a sixth of lessons in the main school.
- Provision is very good in design and technology and art and design, but poor in religious education and unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages and citizenship.
- There is too little work-related and flexible learning, and provision for literacy is unsatisfactory.

The main school has declined significantly since its last inspection. Examination results have not kept pace with the national trend, behaviour and the quality of teaching have worsened, and the range of learning opportunities does not meet the needs of significant numbers of pupils. The school's evaluation of its work has improved, but there has been unsatisfactory progress in tackling the other issues raised in the last report.

The school has serious weaknesses in some of its teaching, in the range of learning opportunities it provides, and in managing poor behaviour. Improving behaviour is a matter of particular urgency.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average in Year 9 and Year 11, but this represents satisfactory achievement in both year groups from students' starting points. Tracking of individual pupils' GCSE results showed satisfactory progress from their test results in Year 9. Some pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds achieve less than they should, and boys do less well than girls. The standard of Year 11 work seen during the inspection was below average, but showed improvement on the 2003 results in most subjects. Year 9 national test results were above average for similar schools in 2003, and were very strong in English.

In Year 9 and Year 11, pupils achieve well in physical education and very well in art and design and design and technology. Achievement is unsatisfactory in modern languages, religious education and citizenship.

Most students join the sixth form with below average standards for their courses, and some have very low GCSE grades. Sixth form achievement is satisfactory, and is good or better in some subjects, notably art and design, design and technology and health and social care. It is poor in biology.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Most pupils have positive attitudes, behave well and work hard. The serious misbehaviour and bullying of a minority interfere with learning and make school life unpleasant for other pupils and some teachers. Thirty pupils with records of poor behaviour attended an off-site course during the inspection. Even so, behaviour was unsatisfactory overall, and teachers in some lessons did not have a fair chance to teach. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Permanent teachers' effective work in very difficult circumstances is the foundation of pupils' achievement. The best of this teaching is very good, and it is occasionally excellent. There are, however, too many weaknesses, mostly in the work of unqualified staff, in planning, marking, homework and managing classes to provide a satisfactory basis for learning. The curriculum is unsatisfactory, with several breaches of legal requirements and too little flexible learning in Years 10 and 11. Some playing surfaces are in poor condition and dangerous. The library is well used, but there is too little use of computers across the school. Care and support for pupils have good features, but do not do enough to tackle the threat posed by bullying.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The very recently appointed acting headteacher provides good leadership and management and has begun to take effective action to address the schools' weaknesses. Other aspects of management are satisfactory. Over half of the governors have joined the governing body this year. They are well organised and have taken a leading role in identifying weaknesses and initiating action. They do not yet, however, meet statutory requirements for religious education, citizenship, collective worship, ICT in Years 10 and 11 or for monitoring the effectiveness of school policies.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most **parents** are seriously dissatisfied with the consistency of teaching, including gaps in homework, and with the damage to their children's education and well-being caused by misbehaviour. **Pupils** expressed similar views to parents, but protested even more strongly about poor behaviour and bullying. Parents' and pupils' views are shared by the acting headteacher and governors, and were fully borne out by inspection evidence.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Take urgent action to improve behaviour and to reduce bullying.
- Improve the range of learning opportunities, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Intensify its efforts to tackle weaknesses in teaching.
- Tackle the barrier to achievement in pupils' literacy skills, and improve the provision and use of ICT.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide religious education for all pupils, and a daily act of collective worship.
- Provide a properly organised and effective programme for citizenship.
- Ensure that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 have adequate opportunities to develop ICT skills.

- Monitor the operation and effectiveness of all school policies systematically.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE GRANGE SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory, and it provides satisfactory value for money. Students join the sixth form with well below average GCSE results. While standards are much lower than in most sixth forms, progress and achievement are satisfactory overall, and sometimes much better. The sixth form budget is balanced, but at the expense of activities outside students' main courses. While some unsuccessful courses have been discontinued, others still do not attract enough students to offer satisfactory value for money, and shared provision with other schools has not yet been developed. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall. The head of the sixth form has a clear strategy for its future development, backed by effective steps to tackle its weaknesses.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most students have good attitudes, work hard and achieve well.
- The head of the sixth form provides good leadership and management.
- The curriculum is increasingly well directed to meeting the learning needs of the students.
- Most students have too little opportunity to use ICT.
- Most students complete their courses, but there are few A and B grades.
- The learning of a minority of students is held back by poor attitudes and attendance.

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	Good in English. Standards are above average. Students are taught well, and are enthusiastic, hard working and independent.
Mathematics	Good. Effective teaching, well adapted to students' needs, enables students to meet target grades, despite below average starting points.
Science	Poor. Standards are well below average in biology and physics. Achievement is unsatisfactory as a result of unsatisfactory teaching and poor management.
Humanities	Satisfactory in history and geography. Standards are below average, but teaching is satisfactory and students make steady progress.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very good. A well thought out design and technology course, combined with very good teaching and excellent leadership enables students to achieve very well.
Visual and performing arts and media	Very good in art and design. Highly skilled teaching and close personal guidance leads to very good achievement, particularly in practical work.
Business	Good. A well-organised, well-taught and increasingly popular course meets students' needs well and leads to good achievement.
Health and social care	Excellent. Outstanding teaching and planning leads students with modest starting points to reach average and at times above average standards.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The overall quality of advice, guidance and support is satisfactory. It has good features in the guidance provided by the head of the sixth form and by teachers in subjects where provision is good or better, and it is very strong in design and technology, art and design and health and social care, particularly for pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds. However, its quality is uneven, and students studying biology have received poor guidance and support. Careers guidance is satisfactory over the course of students' sixth form careers. Very recent changes have secured satisfactory monitoring and guidance on attendance.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of the sixth form, working closely with consultants and the acting headteacher, has developed a clear and workable plan for its future, based on its increasingly successful vocational courses. The school has plans to discontinue more courses that are not viable, and has begun to develop a working agreement with two other high schools on collaboration. The leadership and management of other key sixth form staff is satisfactory overall, with very good to excellent leadership in design and technology, art and design and health and social care, but poor leadership and management in biology.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Most sixth form students are happy with the quality of teaching they receive, but do not think they have enough activities outside their main courses, or that the school pays enough attention to their views. Inspectors agree with both of these points, but found that the head of the sixth form is in good regular contact with students, and that this aspect of provision is improving.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Take further action to ensure that all teaching groups are large enough to provide satisfactory value for money.
- Develop effective co-operation with other schools and colleges.
- Extend students' opportunities to use ICT.
- Extend the range of learning and enrichment opportunities outside lessons.

And to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide religious education for all sixth form students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are below average overall in Year 9 and Year 11. GCSE results were well below average in 2003, but the standard of work seen during the inspection showed some improvement, and was below average overall. This represents satisfactory overall achievement from pupils' starting points in each of Years 9 and 11. Nevertheless, some groups of pupils should achieve more than they do, and achievement is hindered by weaknesses in behaviour and teaching. Standards in the sixth form are below average, but represent satisfactory achievement from students' GCSE results.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement are held back by the very poor behaviour of a minority of pupils.
- Boys tend to achieve less than girls, and some pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds achieve less than they should.
- Year 9 national test results in 2003 were above average in comparison with similar schools.
- Standards are above average throughout the school in art and design.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages, religious education and citizenship.
- Achievement in vocational courses is good, and sometimes better. It is excellent in health and social care in the sixth form.

Commentary

1. Standards among pupils starting Year 7 range from well above average to well below average; overall, they are below average, though pupils in the current Year 7 reached close to average standards in their tests in Year 6. There are particular weaknesses in standards in writing and in speaking and listening among pupils joining the school. Most pupils joining the school after Year 7 have reached below average standards. 2003 results in Year 9 national tests were well below average in mathematics and science, and below average in English. They were above average for similar schools, chiefly because the English result was well above average for these schools. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection in Year 9 showed little difference from the latest test results. In view of pupils' starting points, the test results and the standard of work seen during the inspection represent an acceptable level of achievement, but one which is seriously threatened by the serious weaknesses in teaching and behaviour set out in this report.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.0 (32.5)	33.3 (33.3)
mathematics	32.2 (31.7)	35.3 (34.7)
science	30.3 (30.2)	33.7 (33.3)

There were 236 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. GCSE results were below average for similar schools, but analysis of the results of pupils whose records could be tracked individually showed close to average value added from their Year 9 test results. While the evidence available to inspectors was limited by the absence of Year 11 pupils, analysis of their course work and of the results of mock examinations indicated improvements from the 2003 GCSE results in English, mathematics and science, and also in vocational work, design and technology and art and design. Within subjects, standards are above average throughout the school in art and design, and average in design and technology,

though pupils have above average skills in computer-aided design and in the finishing of their practical work. They are below average in most other subjects, and well below average in modern languages. There are also particular weaknesses in standards in religious education, due to serious gaps in provision for most pupils. Overall, achievement in work seen during the inspection was satisfactory.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	30 (33)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	84 (84)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (96)	96 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	27.3 (29.2)	34.0 (34.7)

There were 243 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. This pattern of satisfactory overall achievement in the very difficult circumstances facing the school is the result of most pupils' determination to do well, and of the effective work of the school's permanent staff. Achievement is, however, held back by weaknesses in teaching, mostly by unqualified staff, and by the very poor attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils, who prevent effective learning in some lessons and sometimes discourage others from working. The school has established effective central systems for monitoring pupils' standards and progress, but is not yet making systematic use of the evidence these are yielding on patterns of achievement for different groups of pupils in order to boost achievement. At present, there are weaknesses in the achievement of boys in relation to that of girls, which are only partly due to the larger number of boys with negative attitudes, and also among some pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds. Here, there is clear evidence of lower standards reached by boys in Year 9, but a mixed pattern in Year 11 that needs further analysis. Inspection evidence across subjects showed poor literacy skills as a significant barrier to achievement.

4. The trend of examination and test results in recent years has been below average. At GCSE, there has been little change in the proportion of pupils with five passes at grade C or above but there are very few A or A* grades, and the proportion of B grades is also low in most subjects. The pattern of girls' and boys' achievement has shown little change since the last inspection. However, while pupils with special educational needs were making good progress at that time, their achievement has been constrained by weaknesses in provision across subjects, and most are now making satisfactory rather than good progress. Parents had mixed views on achievement and progress prior to the inspection. Just under two-thirds thought their child was making good progress, and just under a third felt their progress was unsatisfactory. Inspection evidence confirmed parents' views of the factors hindering achievement in the school.

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	80.9 (82.4)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	15.4 (21.4)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	156.9 (179.7)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 35 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. Students join the sixth form with well below average GCSE results, and some have very few pass grades. While examination results have been consistently well below average, overall, achievement from this starting point is satisfactory. While standards are below average, over four-fifths of pupils complete their courses with pass grades. Achievement is very good in art and design, where standards are above average, and in design and technology. It is good in mathematics, business studies and physical education. There is excellent achievement in the vocational health and social care course, which includes a high proportion of students with minority ethnic backgrounds.
6. Achievement in other courses inspected was satisfactory, except for biology, where achievement is poor as a result of weaknesses in organisation and teaching. Evidence of achievement in ICT was limited, as courses offered had finished by the time of the inspection; however, analysis of students' work indicated that achievement was limited by the range of courses offered. Students' skills in ICT are developed very well in design and technology, and they make excellent use of computers for coursework in health and social care. In several other courses, particularly business studies, lack of access to ICT is holding back achievement. The achievement of a minority of students is held back by poor attendance and attitudes. The school plans to tackle this problem by taking steps to ensure that students have a genuine commitment to their courses before admitting them to the sixth form.
7. The head of the sixth form, with consultants and the acting headteacher, has analysed the pattern of strengths and weaknesses in the sixth form closely. Some courses where examination results have been poor have been closed, and discussions are under way with other high schools to develop the stronger courses further. This management action is beginning to improve the pattern of achievement in the sixth form.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall, pupils' attitudes to school and their work are satisfactory. Behaviour is unsatisfactory overall, and some pupils' behaviour is very poor. Relationships and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils want to work and learn, but the behaviour of a minority seriously disrupts learning.
- The rate of exclusion, particularly fixed-period exclusion, is well above average.
- There is some bullying and racism, including racial harassment of some staff.
- A minority of pupils have very poor attendance records.
- Sixth formers generally show good attitudes towards their courses and behave well.

Commentary

8. Most pupils are positive about their work, most of their teachers and the friendships formed with other pupils. However, they are frustrated by the negative impact on their learning of staffing instability, the behaviour of a minority of pupils, and the high levels of litter that prevail. In lessons, attitudes are significantly better when teaching is good. Pupils respond particularly well when expectations are high, teaching is enriched with purposeful visual aids, and they are able to engage in a variety of practical activities. Their enthusiasm for practical activities is clear in art and design, design and technology and physical education. Attitudes deteriorate sharply in lessons where the content is the same for all, particularly in mixed groups with a wide range of abilities and learning needs. There is some evidence of an anti-achievement culture among younger pupils. Pupils in Years 7 to 9, for example, say they are not comfortable talking about lessons or learning outside lessons. There is also evidence of resistance to this by well-motivated pupils.
9. Staff and pupils told inspectors that pupil behaviour was significantly better than normal, during the inspection, because no Year 11 pupils were present and pupils most likely to disrupt

learning were attending the off-site course in performing arts. During the inspection, most pupils behaved sensibly throughout the day. In lessons and departments where teaching was good or better, unsatisfactory behaviour was unusual and confined to very few pupils. In some lessons, pupils behaved well even when teaching was unsatisfactory, but in others they responded with disruptive and sometimes insolent behaviour. In a significant minority of lessons, poor behaviour disrupted the learning of the whole class, and did not give teachers a fair chance to do their work properly. In some cases, this caused distress to teachers. In a small minority of lessons, racist remarks by one or more pupils to overseas staff were an unacceptable feature.

10. Outside lessons, a high level of supervision ensures a generally orderly atmosphere, even in crowded corridors and the cramped dining hall. However, isolated incidents of pushing, shoving and play-fighting sometimes caused concern to pupils, especially the young and the timid, and the layout of the playground causes frequent accidents as a result of this behaviour. There is some bullying and racism. Discussions with a group of Year 7 pupils reveal that some pupils with special educational needs are picked on, despite regular discussions about bullying, as part of the personal, social and health education lessons, for example. Discussions with a group of Year 11 pupils reveal an unusual acceptance that some racism was considered inevitable. Pupils say that senior pastoral staff are the most effective in addressing racist and bullying incidents, once reported. Nevertheless, some incidents recur.
11. The table below shows that fixed and permanent exclusion rates were above average during the year prior to the inspection. There are some indications that the fixed term exclusions rate is now declining as management has introduced a more staged response to incidents of unacceptable behaviour. The main reasons for exclusions are physical assault, fighting and foul language, disruptive and inappropriate behaviour.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1002	137	5
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – Any other white background	33	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	30	7	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	190	24	1
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	5	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	7	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	1	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	10	0	0

Information not obtained	1	0	0
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The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

12. In three of the last four years, including the current year, attendance has been below the national average. The school's data shows a steady decline in attendance as pupils move through the school. Unauthorised absence is persistently well above average. Punctuality is unsatisfactory in the mornings and throughout the school day. As a result, up to ten per cent of timetabled lesson time is lost or ineffective. The school's action to combat absence lacks persistence and clarity. Plans are in place to introduce first day of absence contact. Due in part to staffing and responsibility changes, analysis of patterns of absence among different groups of pupils is under-used.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (91.7%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.4	School data:	3.0
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year (2002/3).

13. Overall, provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Most pupils exercise responsibility for themselves and others in a sensible way. Year 10 buddies, working as part of the Year 7's induction, and the Year 11 prefects show enthusiasm and commitment in their roles. The school and year councils, however, are seen by other pupils as having limited impact on school life. Pupils are very effectively encouraged to take part in charity work by an emphasis on the effects of their contribution on local as well as world charities, and an attractive and well maintained notice board. Assemblies and the work of care staff make clear to pupils the difference between right and wrong, and the acting headteacher is giving priority to making this work more consistent.
14. The school offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take part in musical and dramatic performances. These are well attended and contribute to achievement, particularly among pupils with talents in these fields. The choice of topics in a wide range of subjects gives pupils clear understanding of the range of cultures in the world and in modern British society. While assemblies do not take place daily, those seen were of good quality, and offered good opportunities for reflection. There are, however, too few opportunities for spiritual development in lessons across the school.

Sixth form

15. Most sixth formers enjoy their school and the courses they selected. They find most teachers accessible and helpful when they have problems or queries. Some students justifiably express concerns about current staffing instability in some subjects, such as biology. They also talk about the negative impact of previous staffing instability, causing gaps in their learning. Students recognise that there has been a step change in the way they are treated by staff, compared with main school. They are expected to be more responsible for their work, for example. In most lessons, students listen well and show good levels of interest, concentration and determination to complete set tasks. Students' behaviour is good in the sixth form. Relationships between staff and students and among students are generally good.
16. Students' personal development is satisfactory. When questioned as individuals and groups, their responses are articulate and thoughtful. Some students do voluntary work, for example as part of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Discussions, initiated by the sixth form council, have led to redecoration and more seating in the common room. Sixth form students, however, do not play a significant role in the leadership of the school, and there are too few activities for them beyond their main courses.

17. Most sixth form students attend regularly, but the poor attendance of a minority leads to an attendance rate that is significantly lower than in the main school, and unsatisfactory. The head of sixth form has put in place a good series of practical measures to cut down on unauthorised absence and improve punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is unsatisfactory because of serious weaknesses in the consistency of teaching and learning and in the range of learning opportunities. There are some serious shortcomings in accommodation and resources, and there are too few permanent, qualified teachers to meet the needs of the pupils. Provision for pupils' care and well-being does not ensure that all feel safe and is unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning in the main school is unsatisfactory. Most permanent, qualified teachers teach to a good standard, but there is too much unsatisfactory teaching from unqualified and temporary staff. The very poor behaviour of a minority of students interferes with learning. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is satisfactory, and has some significant strengths. The quality and use of assessment is satisfactory in the main school and in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good or better in just over half of the lessons across the school.
- Teaching in just under a sixth of lessons in the main school is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in managing classes, matching work to pupils' learning needs, marking and setting homework.
- Some unqualified teachers teach to a high standard, but others have weaknesses in subject knowledge, understanding of the National Curriculum and managing pupils.
- Some pupils' behaviour seriously disrupts learning and does not give teachers a chance to teach.
- Roughly half of the lessons are not planned to meet the needs of the highest and lowest-attaining pupils.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 174 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (3%)	23 (13%)	67 (39%)	58 (33%)	18 (10%)	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.

18. Teaching and learning over the past two years have been seriously affected by staffing difficulties in most departments. A local education authority review at the beginning of the present school year found teaching unsatisfactory in three-tenths of lessons. By the time of the inspection, this had fallen to just under a sixth of lessons in the main school, with a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in the sixth form. The reduction reflects the impact of the work of senior management and consultants on improving lesson planning and management and control of pupils. Nevertheless, parents and pupils were highly critical of inconsistencies in teaching across the school, and their views were borne out by inspection evidence despite these improvements. Teaching in a significant minority of classes is not enabling pupils to learn effectively because of a lack of subject knowledge and understanding, intellectual challenge and basic class management skills. The high turnover of staff in the current year has made it very

difficult for senior managers to ensure consistency in homework and marking across the school. Work is too often left unmarked, and there are serious gaps in many pupils' homework diaries, some of which are regularly signed by parents but not by teachers. In some classes, a succession of temporary teachers, combined with the poor attitudes of some pupils, has led to a poor learning atmosphere in which misbehaviour goes unchecked and teachers and conscientious pupils do not have a fair chance to work and learn. These are serious weaknesses.

19. On the other hand, the school's permanent teachers have responded to the situation with diligent, well thought-out work that is enabling pupils to learn and make progress. In lessons where the teaching is very good, pupils show their appreciation of teachers' work by behaviour that is often exemplary and by working hard. Very good teaching during the inspection was prevalent in design and technology and art and design, but there were individual examples of very good and, occasionally, excellent teaching in other subjects. Planning was generally clear and effective in good lessons, which also showed good knowledge and understanding of the subject and good management and relationships. Where teaching is satisfactory, planning allows satisfactory learning for most pupils, but does not focus on the needs of the least and most capable in the class. In some satisfactory lessons a very clear learning goal set out in planning is not pursued effectively as the lesson proceeds.
20. Teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory overall. They use it well in the longer term, particularly to review progress and to set targets at GCSE, but there are weaknesses in marking, particularly in giving guidance on ways of improving work, and teachers make too little use of National Curriculum level descriptions or equivalent grading systems to ensure that work is consistently pitched at the right level for their classes. The assessment of special educational needs is good, but parents told inspectors that recommendations in individual education plans were not consistently followed through across subjects.

Sixth form

21. Sixth form teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and there are significant strengths in several courses, notably art and design and design and technology, where teaching is very good, and health and social care, where it is excellent. Teaching in all three of these subjects is very well thought out to meet the needs of the students, who often start from the basis of well below average GCSE results. Teaching in most lessons enables students to make consistently satisfactory progress, but there was some weakness in geography teaching during the inspection, and unsatisfactory teaching in biology contributes to unsatisfactory achievement in the subject. Learning in the sixth form is satisfactory, but its quality is restricted by the lack of learning opportunities beyond lessons, and by inconsistency in the co-ordination and teaching of literacy and ICT skills. Where the teaching is very good or excellent, students' attention to their coursework is also of high quality, but coursework reflects the weaknesses in teaching where this is unsatisfactory.
22. Sixth form teachers make satisfactory overall use of assessment, which shows a similar pattern of strengths and weaknesses to other aspects of teaching. There are significant strengths in the use of assessment and in involving students in their own assessment where teaching is very good or excellent, but it is not used consistently enough to match work to students' needs where teaching is satisfactory or less than satisfactory.
23. Most students' learning is helped by their good attitudes, behaviour and hard work, but the learning of a minority is held back by poor attitudes and attendance, and the head of the sixth form is taking strong action to address this issue. There were several examples of effective teaching of revision classes during the inspection.

The curriculum

The curriculum is not providing satisfactory learning opportunities throughout the main school, and it is poor in Years 10 and 11. Arrangements to enrich learning beyond lessons are satisfactory, with good features. Accommodation and resources for learning are inadequate, and there is a serious shortage of qualified specialist teachers.

Learning opportunities in the sixth form are satisfactory, but there is too little enrichment beyond lessons. The sixth form is adequately staffed; there is too little specialised accommodation, and too few ICT resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of learning opportunities is severely limited by gaps in staffing.
- There are significant gaps in legal requirements for ICT, citizenship, religious education and collective worship.
- There are serious weaknesses in special educational needs provision across subjects.
- The grouping of pupils is not planned systematically to promote learning.
- Accommodation has been placed under great pressure by the expansion of the school since its last inspection. It is unsatisfactory for English and food technology, and unsafe for outdoor PE.
- The curriculum does not do enough to promote literacy and ICT skills.
- There are strengths in the curriculum for design and technology, art and design, business studies, physical education and health and social care.
- The library is well run and provides extensive book collections on request.

Commentary

24. Provision in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is satisfactory, and teachers in these and some other subjects are making effective use of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9. On the other hand, the curriculum has serious weaknesses which are having a direct effect on achievement and on pupils' personal development. Some gaps in statutory requirements, notably the lack of religious education in Years 7 to 9, have been caused by failure to recruit staff, and some other weaknesses, such as the inconsistent provision for citizenship, reflect high staff turnover. There are further weaknesses caused by the timetable, which provides no interval between lessons, so that 50-minute lessons are often in effect 45 minutes. This limits the effective teaching of PE and some practical subjects, and pupils do not receive the current target of 2 hours of PE per week. The grouping of pupils in most subjects results in an exceptionally wide range of learning needs in each class; while some teachers plan effectively to meet these, not all do so. Parents told inspectors that the needs of the highest-attaining pupils and of those with special educational needs were not consistently met, and inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils' literacy problems are not addressed consistently enough across subjects, and there is too little use of ICT, chiefly because of limited resources.
25. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 does not provide religious education or ICT for all pupils and there are insufficient opportunities to use ICT in other subjects because the school has less than the recommended number of computers. The school has only recently begun to develop flexible learning, and the successful 9-day course that overlapped with the inspection has not yet been followed up by longer-term arrangements. There are, however, some successful vocationally-oriented courses in business studies, child development and health and social care that are opening up new opportunities for sixth form students, including many from minority ethnic backgrounds. A course in Urdu also makes an effective contribution to these pupils' learning opportunities. The work experience programme is effective, with all teachers making on-site visits; a small number of pupils have extended work placements. Provision for English as an additional language, special educational needs and for language and literacy throughout the curriculum is not managed effectively. Curriculum planning for careers education, personal, social and health education, sex education, and education against the misuse of drugs is adequate. Assemblies are of good quality throughout the school, but do not constitute an act of collective worship.

26. There are some good opportunities for learning beyond the school day, including drama productions, regular sporting activities and overseas visits. There is a good range of musical activities, though they involve a relatively small number of pupils. The school has begun to develop additional learning opportunities for some subjects, notably science, where there is good co-operation with a nearby grammar school. These, however, are not consistent, and not all subjects are represented.
27. The school has sufficient accommodation to teach most subjects, but there are some weaknesses. Outdated accommodation for food technology makes it difficult for teachers to introduce pupils to modern working practices, and partitioning in English rooms leads to constant interruption to discussions and other learning by working noise from other classes. Outside accommodation for PE is poor and unsafe, and the condition and design of the playground, which includes low obstacles such as disused concrete cycle parking blocks, leads to accidents when pupils play roughly. The library is well run and has up-to-date book stocks, which are effectively supplemented by the county book loan scheme. It is, however, small for the size of the school, and has too few computers with Internet connections. Most subjects have adequate resources for learning, but there is a significant shortage of ICT equipment, which the school's budget makes it difficult to tackle. Inadequate staffing by permanent, qualified teachers, and the very high turnover of staff, are major obstacles to learning. While some staff who do not have qualified teacher status are very well qualified in other respects, the succession of new teachers, who often have to take over disaffected classes, has been recognised by the school as a major issue that needs to be addressed.

Sixth form

28. The range of learning opportunities is satisfactory. New vocational courses are being developed to meet students' needs, and courses that attract too few students or are unsuccessful are being discontinued, though there are still some in which teaching groups are too small to justify the deployment of staff when statutory requirements are not met in the main school. The sixth form's balanced budget, however, has been achieved at the expense of cuts in activities beyond lessons, which are inadequate, and, as in the main school, there are too few ICT resources. This limits students' progress both in ICT and in its use in their other subjects, though provision for the key skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The head of the sixth form has drawn up effective plans to tackle weaknesses in the curriculum and build on the success of the vocational courses, and is working closely with the acting headteacher to put them into practice. No courses are currently shared with other schools, but the school has developed a suitable draft agreement with support from the local education authority.

Care, guidance and support

The school's arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils do not ensure that they feel safe in school; despite some good features, they are unsatisfactory overall. Support and guidance for pupils, based on monitoring their progress, is satisfactory. The steps taken by the school to involve pupils in its work are not effective, as pupils do not see that their views are valued and acted upon. Care, guidance and involvement in the sixth form are satisfactory, with good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant minority of pupils do not feel safe, and do not feel that bullying is tackled effectively.
- There are significant weaknesses in the consistency and quality of guidance in tutorial lessons.
- Annual review days for pupils are based on effective monitoring of their progress.
- Specialist care and support for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- There are good induction arrangements for pupils joining Year 7.
- School and year group councils have very limited impact on the work of the school.
- Specialist staff and the head of the sixth form make a very effective contribution to care.

Commentary

29. The acting headteacher, governors and senior staff work hard to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Child protection procedures are fully in place, and there are suitable arrangements for first aid, though the playground surface and large number of low walls make accidents likely to happen when pupils play roughly. Risk assessments are not in place in all subjects, and this is an important issue in some, notably physical education, where the site poses particular difficulties.
30. Heads of Year and the school's experienced and permanent teachers make an important contribution to care through the good relationships they build up. Nevertheless, the consistency of provision is seriously affected by the high turnover of staff, which makes it very difficult for the school to deal consistently with the minority of pupils who have poor attitudes. Pupils told inspectors that bullying incidents were usually followed up, but not always effectively, and that they did not have confidence that some teachers would deal with them. The result of this is to make pupils feel unsettled in their work, and to discourage achievement. While there was evidence of improved supervision of the site during the inspection, issues raised by parents in pupils prior to the inspection, for example, of pupils smoking in parts of the school that were not easy to supervise, were confirmed by inspection evidence. The daily tutorial period provided a good start to the day and effective day-to-day guidance in roughly half of the sessions observed, and the best were very good. The remainder, however, were not effectively organised, and often left pupils with nothing constructive to do.
31. Pupils' progress is systematically monitored, and assessment and target setting are satisfactory. Guidance to pupils based on review days is effective, and they have satisfactory careers advice, including a good work experience programme. Arrangements for new pupils joining Year 7 are well organised and effective. The school provides additional guidance to pupils who are at risk of exclusion, though this is made less effective by weaknesses in the curriculum, which does not provide adequately for these pupils' learning needs. Pupils told inspectors that they did not feel that school and year councils in the main school were having any significant impact on the school's work. Inspection evidence confirmed this view.

Sixth form

32. The overall quality of sixth form care and guidance is satisfactory. The head of the sixth form has analysed systems carefully, and is putting in place a good series of practical steps to improve consistency in care, attendance and in students' use of time beyond lessons. These are beginning to have an impact on attendance rates, but have not fully dealt with the impact on achievement of the poor attitudes and attendance of a minority of students. Students told inspectors that the head of the sixth form was open to discussion with them, and took account of their views, whether expressed individually or through the sixth form council. Within tutorial groups and subjects, the quality of care is satisfactory overall, though it lacks consistency, particularly in the use of data and target grades, and in the sense of purpose and direction of tutorials. Care and guidance for lower-attaining students and those with minority ethnic background is good, and is linked to the increasing provision of vocational courses. Guidance to students on the next stage of their education or careers is satisfactory.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

A large majority of parents have justified concerns about the quality of education the school provides, and about their children's welfare. The school's relationship with parents is unsatisfactory. Links with the local community are satisfactory. Links with other schools and colleges make a satisfactory contribution to learning in the main school, but not in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have well founded concerns about teaching, behaviour and their children's well-being.
- Much information for parents is good, but there are significant gaps.
- A significant minority of tutors do not check and sign pupils' planners regularly.
- Despite their important concerns, most parents support the school effectively.
- There are good links with the local grammar schools and pupil referral unit.
- The school has not developed effective co-operation with other sixth forms.

Commentary

33. A substantial proportion of parents have lost confidence in key aspects of the school's provision. They are most concerned about the unacceptable behaviour of a small minority of pupils, which adversely affects the learning of the majority and some younger pupils' feeling of safety. High staff turnover, leading to a host of inconsistencies in teaching, care and homework levels, is their other major concern. The school's leadership and staff share parents' concerns. Inspection evidence confirms that these fundamental issues are having a significant effect on the quality of education, and that action taken to date to deal with them is not fully effective. These issues are at the heart of the school's serious weaknesses.
34. Most written annual reports provide clear statements on pupils' strengths, areas for improvement and targets in each subject. Current and predicted grades are also included. Additional interim reports provide clear updates on progress and notice of any concerns. Where requested, written information on pupils' progress is translated into Urdu. Annual reviews for pupils with special educational needs are supported by good information and carried out to a good standard. Review days for all pupils, attended by form tutors, pupils and most parents, have been successfully introduced in the past year. These reviews are valued by pupils and have led to a major increase in parental attendance in comparison with the traditional parents' evenings. However, the high staff turnover has resulted, in a minority of cases, in incomplete annual reports and a lack of credibility, among parents, in the information provided on pupils' progress. Analysis of pupils' planners showed that many had not been checked and signed by tutors, sometimes even when parents signed them regularly. Given the significant nature and volume of parents' concerns, there is currently insufficient management oversight to ensure concerns are handled effectively or consistently. The recent introduction of regular newsletters, to which school staff and governors contribute, is an important early step in reassuring parents and restoring confidence.
35. Parents' support for the school is reflected in the considered way they expressed their important concerns at the parents' meeting and the large number of well-argued notes and letters attached to the questionnaire returns. Most attend their children's review days. A recent invitation for parent governors was oversubscribed, and parents occupy key positions on the governing body. The Grange School parent teacher association makes an important contribution through fundraising and social events. By helping to organise discos for Year 7 pupils, the group also contribute to pupils' personal development, for example. The group are also a key partner in the organisation of planned events to celebrate the school's 50th anniversary celebration, later this year.
36. The school plays its part as a resource for the local community, through use of its facilities for adult education classes and by a junior football team. Pupils do a significant amount of fundraising for charities, and there is a strong emphasis on local charities. Pupils are encouraged in this work by a very attractive and well-maintained notice board celebrating their contributions. Work experience, including some extended work placements arranged with the help of the Education Business Partnership, make an important contribution for pupils thinking of taking employment at the end of Year 11. Public services, such as the police, the youth team, including the youth offending team and counsellors, make an important contribution. There are good links with the local mosque. The Imam contributes to personal, social and health education lessons and some religious education lessons.

37. The school has good links with local primary schools on matters related to pupil induction. They include a summer school for pupils who achieve a Level 3 in the Year 6 national tests in English or mathematics. There are important language department links with the adjacent girls' grammar school in relation to Urdu and Italian. Pupils' learning, in science, benefits from after-school lessons at the adjacent boys' grammar school. There are growing vocational links with the local college, for Year 10 and 11 pupils, although available capacity on courses is insufficient to meet demand. Links with the pupil referral unit provide additional support for pupils at risk of exclusion, especially in Years 10 and 11. There are important business studies department links with a London college. Teachers in training, from Oxford Brookes University and the Open University, take part of their teaching practice at the school.

Sixth form

38. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting were more positive about sixth form provision than that in the main school, and several were pleased that their children had progressed to university. Vocational courses benefit from extensive links with hospitality, catering and childcare providers. The business studies department benefits from good links with Buckingham Chilterns University. However, while there have been recent and productive discussions with two other secondary schools on collaboration and joint provision, these have not yet resulted in any shared courses. As a result, the school is still offering some courses that are not viable, and some of its most successful courses are not fully subscribed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The acting headteacher provides good leadership and management, and that of other members of staff with management responsibility is satisfactory. Governors, of whom a majority joined the governing body in the year of the inspection, have taken a leading role in identifying shortcomings and initiating action, and the quality of governance is satisfactory. The school does not meet statutory requirements for religious education, citizenship, information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11, and the monitoring of the achievements of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds. The poor attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils and in the high turnover of staff have a significant negative impact on teaching, learning, achievement and the ethos of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The newly appointed acting headteacher provides clear direction and good management.
- The governors are well organised and are taking a leading role in tackling the school's problems.
- The head of the sixth form provides clear direction and has begun to improve provision.
- The school has a substantial deficit in its budget, which it has recently begun to tackle.
- All policies required by law are in place, but their operation is not yet effectively monitored.

Commentary

39. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher on the grounds of ill-health in October 2003, the school was managed by an acting headteacher and a consultant headteacher, with support from local education authority consultants, until the beginning of the summer term 2004. At the time of the inspection, the school was led by an experienced, newly-appointed acting headteacher, who is committed to leading the school for the next academic year. The acting headteacher has worked closely with the consultants to form an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses in all aspects of the school's work. He agrees with the concerns expressed by parents, and has full understanding of the urgent need for improvement. The acting headteacher has set clear priorities for improving teaching and learning, the

management of behaviour and the curriculum, and has planned a reorganisation of the senior leadership team to guide and monitor these developments.

40. By the time of the inspection, this action, combined with the work of the consultants, was improving provision. While the amount of unsatisfactory teaching is too high, it is significantly lower than the local education authority had found at the beginning of the school year. Improved recruitment and deployment procedures have strengthened teaching in science and mathematics, and a manager has been appointed to monitor and develop provision for pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language. Arrangements for managing exclusion have been improved, behaviour outside classrooms is more closely monitored, and pupils with poor behaviour records were responding positively to new arrangements. Data on performance is monitored well, and inspection evidence and pupils' predicted grades indicated some recovery from last year's examination results. Nevertheless, the absence of almost all Year 11 pupils during the inspection, and the off-site course for the pupils with the most significant behavioural difficulties, significantly limited the evidence available on patterns of improvement, and the headteacher and consultants accept that it will take longer to put in place the changes in the curriculum that are needed to provide effectively for lower-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11.
41. The school development plan covers all of the major issues facing the school, though the acting headteacher and local education authority have identified weaknesses in arrangements for monitoring progress. These are being addressed through the reorganisation of the senior leadership group to improve accountability and to ensure that all senior managers are fully involved in monitoring. The overall performance of the senior leadership team and other teachers with management responsibility is satisfactory. Leadership and management are very good in design and technology and art and design, and are good in several other subjects. The management of English, and science is satisfactory, but arrangements for managing citizenship are unsatisfactory, and there are no effective arrangements for managing religious education. These issues are being addressed effectively in the acting headteacher's reorganisation. Local education authority consultants, who are extensively involved in the school, are making a very good contribution to improving its management.
42. The governors are well organised, understand the issues facing the school and have often taken the initiative in beginning action to tackle weaknesses. Parent governors hold important positions on the governing body, and keep it fully in touch with parents' views. Governors are aware that significant statutory requirements that are not met and are working closely with the headteacher to improve on this position and to ensure that all policies are properly monitored. A start on this has been made by improving the collection of data on the standards reached by pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds. Governors' work is well informed by the principles of best value.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,513,565
Total expenditure	3,609,145
Expenditure per pupil	2,710

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-445,913
Balance carried forward to the next	-541,493

43. Much of the deficit the school has built up has been caused by high levels of spending on agency staff, and by essential building work. The professional experience of two newly-appointed governors has played a key role in establishing control over the school's finances and has helped it to reach an agreement with the local education authority on tackling the deficit. The cost per pupil is significantly below the national average, and there are some significant gaps in resources and accommodation, which the deficit makes it more difficult to

address. The most recent auditors' report showed major weaknesses in financial control, but these have now been rectified, and financial management is now satisfactory.

Sixth form

44. The overall quality of leadership and management in the sixth form is satisfactory. The head of the sixth form was appointed from the beginning of the current school year, and has made a good start in analysing strengths and weaknesses in provision and in planning a clear future for the sixth form in co-operation with other local schools and colleges. Some courses in which results have been low have been discontinued, and there are plans to carry this further, and practical steps have been taken to clarify course requirements and to deal with the minority of students whose attendance is very poor. On the other hand, while plans for collaboration with other schools have been made at a senior level, they are not yet in place. The school continues to offer some courses, notably in languages to groups of students that are too small for the course to offer value for money or a good learning environment for the students. The overall leadership and management of sixth form subjects is satisfactory. It is excellent in health and social care, and very good in art and design and design and technology. The management of most other sixth form subjects ranges from satisfactory to good, but provision for biology is poorly managed, and the consistency of learning suffers as a result. The sixth form budget is balanced, but this has been achieved at the expense of activities beyond lessons for sixth form students, which are inadequate, and there are too few ICT resources, particularly for business studies. The clarity of planning for the sixth form, and the strategic decision to concentrate on its strengths in vocational work, put it in a good position to improve further.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are examples of good and very good teaching and learning.
- The head of department is a good role model for staff and pupils.
- Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, and poor accommodation, are barriers to learning in some lessons.
- Boys reach lower standards than girls, and have weaker literacy skills.
- The school does not develop literacy skills effectively across all subjects.
- Assessment is constructive, but does not always tell pupils how to improve.
- Some classes do not receive regular and effective homework.

Commentary

45. Results in Year 9 national tests and at GCSE were below average in 2003, and girls performed better than boys. The trend over the last three years is one of gradual improvement. Standards during the inspection were also below average throughout the school. Boys' results were not as good as girls' because there are too many boys in lower sets, where unsatisfactory behaviour holds back their learning. The department has plans to re-structure classes to narrow this gap. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented make expected progress because of systematic planning and support. Overall, achievement in English is satisfactory from pupils' starting points.
46. By Year 9 pupils can read and speak a good range of vocabulary, using words such as *personification* quite naturally. However, they cannot write as well as they can read and speak. Analysis and evaluation of texts is comparatively weak. Although these pupils had reached below average standards when they joined the school, their writing skills were weaker. By Year 11, pupils can analyse text but their critical thinking is basic. Some pupils do not read widely or use a wide and appropriate vocabulary. They cannot spell accurately, and boys' literacy skills are a barrier to learning. Speaking and listening skills are generally well developed although a small minority of pupils do not listen respectfully or speak appropriately.
47. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory; it ranges from satisfactory to good in most lessons, with some very good teaching, and a very small amount that is unsatisfactory. Where the teaching is very good, clear structure, fast pace and the teacher's clear relish for the subject inspire pupils to work very hard and productively. Good lessons are based on clear and effective planning that gives pupils scope to express themselves, combined with high expectations and good management. Where the teaching is satisfactory, planning is good, but pace and expectations are less consistent. A history of unstable staffing and unsatisfactory behaviour led to unsatisfactory learning in a Year 8 lesson despite satisfactory teaching. In the small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, work is not matched closely enough to the learning needs of pupils and too little is expected of them. Learning and class management in several rooms are made much more difficult by accommodation that allows pupils to hear every word of what is happening next door. Assessment and marking are constructive and targeted but not all pupils know how to improve. There are significant gaps in homework in some classes.

48. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has taken steps to improve standards, for example by making effective use of materials from the national strategy for Years 7 to 9. Nevertheless, staffing problems, poor accommodation and behaviour problems are significant barriers to improvement, which is overall unsatisfactory since the last inspection. While assessment is now more systematic, pupils' attitudes and behaviour have deteriorated and teaching is not as strong.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. Standards in literacy are a barrier to learning, particularly for boys, and the school's provision is not doing enough to tackle the problem. Formal speech presents a difficulty for many pupils, and their choice of words and structures is not always appropriate. Listening skills are well developed for most pupils, although a significant minority do not listen carefully. Writing is particularly weak when pupils come into school, and there is no clear plan to deal with this across departments. As a result, the priority given to basic writing skills in some departments, such as English, history, design technology and art, is not followed up across the school. In other departments such as religious education and modern foreign languages pupils are not making enough progress, and some teachers are too ready to accept unfinished work. Provision for reading is more effective, partly because of the good use of the library, but shows similar inconsistencies across departments. Improving literacy skills in Years 7 to 9 is a central issue to improving achievement.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is unsatisfactory throughout the school, and GCSE results are well below average.
- There is a strong core of committed, specialist teachers.
- Persistent staffing problems have adversely affected the quality of teaching.
- The disruptive behaviour of a large minority of pupils interferes with learning.
- Teachers have too few opportunities to use ICT.

Commentary

50. Pupils enter the school with no experience of modern foreign languages and below average literacy skills. They choose to study Spanish or French from Years 7 to 11. From Year 10, a minority of pupils study Urdu instead; provision for Urdu was not inspected. Because of good teaching, some pupils learn well in Spanish in Years 7 and 8. However, overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory among all groups of pupils, and standards are well below average. Speaking skills are particularly weak.
51. Pupils continue to underachieve in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Year 10 reached well below average standards in the work seen. They lack confidence in speaking. GCSE standards have deteriorated in both languages since the last inspection. In 2003, results were very low in Spanish and well below average in French. Boys did especially poorly in Spanish. However, Year 11 GCSE coursework in Spanish and French promises an improvement over 2003 standards.
52. Teaching and learning are good in Spanish in Years 7 and 8, but unsatisfactory overall throughout the main school. This is chiefly because of the lack of continuity in many classes, who have been taught by a succession of temporary, inexperienced and non-specialist teachers. Permanent teachers are good linguists, but speak too much English and do not develop pupils' speaking skills well enough. They plan lessons well, using a variety of well-

sequenced activities. The French language assistant provides good support. The most effective teaching caters for different learning styles, but in mixed-ability classes tasks are not adapted to the needs of all pupils. Lower-attaining pupils find the work too hard, while gifted pupils coast. The disruptive behaviour of a large minority of pupils, especially boys, sometimes makes it difficult for even established teachers to be effective. Because of problems of access to computers, ICT is not used well enough to enhance learning. Homework is set regularly, but not always adequately completed. The curriculum is enriched by regular study visits.

53. The temporary leadership and management of the department are satisfactory, but teachers miss the good leadership of the subject leader, who is on maternity leave. The department's improvement plan shows vision and purpose, but there has been insufficient improvement in provision since the last inspection. Classroom teaching is not yet monitored well enough to ensure effective sharing of the good practice of the core of committed teachers.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A committed team promotes mathematics in a positive manner.
- There is much good teaching, but it is not consistent across the department.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- The use of ICT to support learning is seriously underdeveloped.
- There are significant weaknesses in the use of marking and assessment.

Commentary

54. Standards are below average among pupils joining the school, and remain below average at the end of Year 9. However, most pupils have basic calculation skills and are competent in explaining their mathematics. Some middle ability pupils in Year 9 have good understanding of reflection symmetry. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average; a quarter of the pupils gained C or better grades. Some pupils in Year 10 achieve above average standards and have good knowledge and understanding of linear and quadratic equations whilst a lower ability group are confident in estimating and reading scales. Achievement in Years 9 and 11 is satisfactory but is affected by specialist staff recruitment difficulties, which result in wide variations in standards between classes.
55. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching in most lessons ranges from satisfactory to good, though there is some unsatisfactory teaching. When teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge and have high expectations of pupils' work, behaviour and attitudes. These lessons have good pace, show clear continuity and progression and good relationships between the teacher and pupils. This promotes good achievement. Lessons are well planned with clear learning aims communicated to pupils. However, this focus is often lost as the lesson progresses, and higher-attaining pupils are not challenged consistently enough. When teaching is unsatisfactory, there is a lack of purpose because of poor explanation and communication, weak classroom management and poor relationships. Consequently pupils lose interest and learning and behaviour are unsatisfactory.
56. Support staff, when available, contribute positively to the learning of pupils with special educational needs, though there is little additional provision for those with English as an additional language. Homework is set regularly in most classes and consolidates or extends classwork, though there are some gaps. No use is made of ICT to support learning. Assessment procedures need further development to ensure pupils' progress can be tracked and targets set. The quality of marking is inconsistent. Whilst some comments provide clear

guidance for pupils on how to improve the standards of their work, often work is marked superficially or not at all. The development of provision for gifted and talented pupils is in its early stages. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

57. Leadership and management are good. The department has faced acute staffing difficulties in recent times. However, there is very good teamwork and commitment due to the very good role model the head of department provides through her own commitment to high standards, particularly in the classroom. There is a realistic vision for the department aimed at broadening the curriculum and raising standards. She provides good support to both staff and pupils and successfully promotes a collegiate approach to planning. She fully understands the necessity of developing further strategies for formally monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and the potential use of ICT to impact positively on attainment. Additionally, she appreciates the importance of data analysis to inform planning, set targets and monitor progress. Organisation is good and this is reflected in all department documentation, which identifies clear policies and practices for the team to follow. Pupils benefit from a suitable range of enrichment activities, trips and visits.
58. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Lower attaining pupils are receiving more support from teachers and teaching assistants, and are making greater progress. Planning processes are more effective. Teaching is more regularly monitored and there are more enrichment activities. Further progress has, however, been prevented by the high turnover of staff and difficulties with recruitment.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. The use of numeracy in other subjects is satisfactory. Subjects where there is a clear opportunity to use mathematics do so effectively. This includes opportunities to use graphs and interpret data in science, to make accurate measurements in physical education, and to devise time charts in history. The mathematics department has recently produced a suitable policy to develop this work further.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning has been held back by the high turnover of teachers and difficulties in recruiting specialists.
- Teaching is inspiring in some lessons.
- Teachers make good use of the ICT suite.
- Teaching assistants work well with pupils with special educational needs and with those whose first language is not English.
- Arrangements for assessment and target setting are good, but are not used consistently.
- Poor laboratory furniture does not provide a good learning environment.

Commentary

60. Results at GCSE and in Year 9 national tests were well below average in 2003. They were in line with results in similar schools, although there were no A or A* grades. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards are improving and are now close to average due to recent good use of initiatives from the national strategy for Years 7 to 9. Further improvement is, however, impeded by the school's difficulty in recruiting full-time specialist teachers.
61. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. In most lessons, teachers expect high standards and challenge pupils to do well. There is more support for pupils whose first language is not English

in science than in most other subjects, and this leads to good achievement. Achievement is highest where teachers have strong control of behaviour. However, newer teachers are not following departmental procedures, and this interferes with learning. In a few lessons, learning goals are not clearly stated so pupils are unsure of what they have achieved. Weekly booster lessons for pupils in Year 11, and sessions with the nearby grammar school, contribute to rising achievement by Year 11.

62. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching was excellent in one lesson and satisfactory or better in all but one lesson observed during the inspection. Features of the good teaching include fast pace and high expectations of behaviour. Where their teachers have established a strong working relationship with pupils, they enjoy science and are complimentary about their teachers. However, as a result of frequent changes in teachers, some pupils have become disaffected and their learning has been disrupted. Teaching is inspirational in a few lessons. For instance, a group of Year 7 pupils worked collaboratively to investigate the action of acids on metal carbonates and gained a very good understanding of the chemistry involved in the reactions. However, most lessons lacked sufficient differentiation of work to cater for the needs of all pupils in mixed ability classes. Homework policy and assessment of pupils' work are not rigorously applied in all lessons, denying pupils the opportunity to consolidate and extend their learning despite the availability of good homework booklets. The ICT suite is well used and pupils are enthusiastic and skilled in using science assessment programs and revision aids. Teaching assistants and technicians are well deployed and effective.

Example of outstanding practice

In a chemistry lesson with a mixed ability Year 7 group, demanding and inspiring teaching led pupils to carry out experiments, to observe, and to analyse their results to a very high standard.

A well thought-out starter challenged pupils to complete word equations by putting cards in order; the highest-attaining had more difficult exercises, which they did successfully and with pride. Each stage of the lesson was carefully planned to allow pupils to enrich a wide range of skills, including literacy, working collaboratively and handling laboratory equipment safely. Pupils were challenged to identify the gases that are given off when metal carbonates react with acid; they were unfazed when they did not hear the characteristic explosion of hydrogen and confidently predicted that the gas given off was carbon dioxide when their limewater turned cloudy. The pupils' wonderful behaviour and attitude throughout the investigation were such that no one was in any danger when they were using Bunsen burners or acids. The experiment was carried out to a very high standard and students achieved exceedingly well. Throughout this exciting lesson, students analysed each other's work and gave very constructive feedback on what they understood was going on. They were highly satisfied with their achievements, and sad when the lesson came to an end.

63. Leadership is satisfactory. The department is aware of the need to improve standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9, by including recent initiatives from the national strategy including strong literacy links. Satisfactory management has ensured that good departmental policies are introduced but in some cases this has been hampered by rapid staff turnover. Monitoring of standards and the impact of policies is not rigorous enough to ensure compliance throughout the department. There are clear targets for good development but the implementation has been held back by financial constraints and staffing changes. Learning opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are limited because of a lack of vocational programmes. There is good provision in the laboratory, textbooks and library resources. Laboratory equipment is well maintained by technicians who are competent and contribute to the success of the department. Poor work surfaces in the laboratories and few data projection facilities do not provide a good learning environment.
64. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Recent introduction of better teaching practices has led to improving standards in the classroom but this has yet to be reflected in examination results.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average, but recent changes are leading to improvements.
- Standards in the optional GCSE course are average, and higher-attaining pupils are doing well.
- Pupils who do not study ICT at GCSE have too few opportunities to develop their skills.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but is not always matched to different learning needs.
- There are too few specialist teachers to provide teaching for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The use of ICT to promote learning in all subjects of the curriculum is underdeveloped.
- There is a good development plan, and it is being effectively put into practice.

Commentary

65. Pupils begin Year 7 with below average standards; most are one National Curriculum level below the nationally expected standard. Standards show steady improvement in Years 7 to 9, but remain below average. By Year 9, pupils can operate computer systems and use them for wordprocessing, spreadsheets, and databases. They can search the Internet sensibly for information and make judgements about the provenance and plausibility of what they find. About half of the pupils choose to continue with ICT to GCSE. With specialist teaching and additional time these pupils make faster progress than in Years 7 to 9, and their achievement is satisfactory. The course is new and currently no pupils have yet completed their full GCSE assessment. Course work standards and interim test results show broadly average overall standards, with good achievement from higher-attaining pupils.
66. Many GCSE pupils demonstrate commitment and maturity with their course work. However those pupils who do not choose the GCSE option have no regular teaching programme; the curriculum does not meet legal requirements for these pupils and their standards in ICT are not measured. While achievement in all courses provided is satisfactory or better, this lack of provision for a substantial number of students means that provision across the school is unsatisfactory.
67. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers work together to plan lessons, carefully basing them on published schemes of work and the methodology of the national strategy for ICT. Careful planning enables non-specialist teachers to contribute successfully to the teaching programme in Years 7 to 9. Teachers make good use of modern ICT resources but do not make sufficient distinction between the learning needs of gifted and less able pupils. Most pupils enjoy their lessons, like working with the computers and find the work interesting. Sometimes lessons are spoiled by the unwillingness of a significant group of pupils to pay attention or to work. At worst, this leads to unsatisfactory learning for the class even when teaching is satisfactory.
68. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A good development plan is being well implemented, there is sensible use of resources and effective day-to-day organisation. There is appropriate oversight from senior managers. However difficulty in securing additional specialist teachers is delaying progress to provide more teaching in Years 10 and 11. Recent investment has provided two additional ICT suites to allow for a new taught course in Years 7 to 9 that is now offered in addition to successful ICT elements within design and technology. There are already signs that this improved curriculum is leading to higher standards in Year 9.
69. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the curriculum in Years 7 to 9, introduced a new optional GCSE course, and developed some good new resources. However, it has not yet been able to meet statutory requirements for roughly half of the pupils in Years 10 and 11, and improvement overall is therefore unsatisfactory.

Information technology across the curriculum

70. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in other subjects is underdeveloped. Many departments have very little access to computer suites, and too little equipment in their own classrooms. There are few data projectors and interactive whiteboards and this is preventing teaching staff from making full use of the laptop computers and training that the government has provided. The school is currently well short of the number of computers needed to meet the government target ratio of 1 machine for every 5 pupils by September 2004. There are particular weaknesses in music and modern languages. Very good use of ICT in design and technology, however, makes an important contribution to the ICT programme. Pupils work on measurement and control technology, and use specialised computer-aided design and numerical machine control applications. Pupils use their home computers for course work and research in many contexts. The school is well served by a high-speed safety-filtered Internet service but network provision is not yet available in many classrooms.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good teamwork in the newly formed department.
- Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11, particularly among girls.
- Teaching strategies are satisfactory, but do not meet the needs of all pupils.
- Arrangements to review and track progress are satisfactory, but could be improved.
- There is some good use of ICT in pupils' work, but too little in lessons.

Commentary

71. Pupils begin with below average standards for their age, and standards remain below average in Year 9 and in GCSE results. By Year 11, boys are achieving results that are in line with those in similar schools, but girls do significantly better. Overall achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, particularly among girls.
72. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with no unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection. Three quarters of the teachers are new to the school this year, and half qualified overseas. Relationships with pupils are very good and the atmosphere in classrooms is respectful and purposeful. Lessons are conscientiously prepared and confidently delivered. Nevertheless, the teaching of mixed ability classes does not meet the full range of pupils' needs. More able pupils are not being sufficiently challenged, making the pace of learning slow, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning. Marking is conscientious but does not use the school's marking policy consistently. There are good arrangements for assessment at the end of Year 9, and good use is made of performance data in setting targets. However, the tracking of progress is weak, and there is too little involvement of pupils in reviewing their own work.
73. Leadership is good. The head of department has established good teamwork amongst the new staff and has made good use of her own expertise and that of external consultants to monitor and develop the skills of the teachers. Management is satisfactory; a departmental development plan, a handbook and schemes of work are in place although these need adaptation to meet the needs of all pupils. Use of ICT is restricted by lack of access to equipment and although good use of ICT was seen in pupils' work, none was seen in lessons. Work that developed pupils' skills in numeracy was seen in lessons and key words are

displayed in classrooms and in the lesson objectives. Departmental resources are satisfactory with sufficient rooms and good adjacent storage. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. GCSE results have maintained their upward trend despite a period of considerable turnover in the teaching staff.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well below average, but standards during the inspection were better.
- The recently appointed subject leader provides good leadership and management.
- The best teaching actively involves and challenges pupils.
- There are inconsistencies in teaching, marking and assessment.
- Behaviour is generally well managed, though not in all classes.
- There is too little support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Resources are well managed, but there is too little use of ICT.

Commentary

74. Standards are below average in Year 9, but achievement is satisfactory because pupils start school with very limited historical skills. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were well below average, but work seen in Years 10 and 11 indicates that standards are rising. Greater stability in staffing, the use of a wider range of teaching strategies and effective systems of assessment, are enabling all GCSE pupils to achieve satisfactorily. Numbers opting for the subject are steadily rising. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls, those pupils who speak English as an additional language, or those with special educational needs.
75. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Where teaching is good, staff have a sound knowledge of their subject, set clear learning objectives and make effective use of a wide variety of historical teaching resources. Good classroom relationships encourage pupils to play an active role in their learning and most respond positively to new challenges. However, in a minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9, teaching and behaviour are less than satisfactory. In these lessons pupils are insufficiently challenged, the work set is not adapted to match individual needs and pupils are provided with limited opportunities to work independently.
76. Many pupils have under-developed literacy skills that limit their ability to write extended pieces of work. Teachers are addressing this issue and there are signs that literacy standards are improving, especially in Years 7 to 9. However, provision of additional support for pupils with statements of special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Subject teachers work extremely hard to minimise the impact of this lack of support on individual pupil achievement. Key historical skills are well taught and the analysis of sources is a strength of the department, but restricted access to ICT limits pupils' opportunities for individual research. Marking is inconsistent and assessment needs to be more closely focused on what pupils need to do in order to improve their work.
77. The subject is well led and managed. There is a clear vision for improvement and a recognition of the need to establish a greater degree of consistency across all aspects of the department's work. Systems for marking, assessment and target setting are good, but they still need to be applied more consistently across the department. Liaison with the librarian is good, but there are too few specialised books for pupils to use in homework. The department's current position shows satisfactory overall progress from weaknesses seen during the last inspection, particularly in management. However, the level and quality of support for pupils with special educational needs have fallen, and consistency still needs to be improved.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils are not taught any religious education, in breach of the statutory requirement.
- Teaching seen during the inspection, all of it in Year 10, was unsatisfactory.
- The subject is not led, although GCSE arrangements have been satisfactorily managed.
- The school has no specialist staff to teach religious education.

Commentary

78. GCSE results were average in 2003 and above average in 2002. Standards in course work seen from the Year 11 GCSE class are broadly average. Higher-attaining pupils recognise plural responses to moral issues within Christianity and produced detailed writing on the effect of the Hajj on the life of believers with references from the Qur'an, reference to Malcolm X and exploration of the physical and spiritual journey. Lower-attaining pupils use Bible quotations to explain Christian attitudes to abortion. Overall in Year 10 pupils of different abilities make satisfactory progress although there was some underachievement in lessons seen. Higher attaining pupils' written responses show good understanding of Christian ethics in relation to the morality of war. Middle attaining pupils explained general teachings from Christianity and Islam, although boys' work is less detailed. Lower attaining pupils' work is neat and accurate, recording key information and making personal responses to moral issues. Pupils with English as an additional language make similar progress to the class as a whole; pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but perform better orally than in writing.
79. While Year 11 coursework showed evidence of satisfactory teaching and learning, the only teaching that could be observed during the inspection took place in Year 10. This was unsatisfactory, chiefly because teachers did not manage classes well, and some pupils were unco-operative. Average and lower attaining pupils were not positively engaged, although learning support provided enabled groups of pupils to focus for parts of the lessons. In a lesson on the ethics of abortion too much time was wasted in behaviour management but pupils were interested, discussed reasonably well, and made some written responses. Assessment comments do not provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work.
80. Leadership and management are very poor. The school makes no provision for religious education, except for two GCSE classes, so that statutory requirements to teach all registered pupils religious education according to the locally agreed syllabus are not met. As a result, achievement throughout the school is unsatisfactory, despite better work on the current GCSE course. There is no leadership in place. The GCSE course is managed by an unqualified teacher with some support from senior management; this has resulted in satisfactory coursework completion, but there has been no subject specialist guidance to support the improvement of teaching. This is a serious deterioration in all aspects since the last inspection. The subject requires immediate attention.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership is developing new approaches to learning and is raising standards.
- Sensitive and skilful teachers challenge pupils and boost their confidence and achievement.
- Examination results are held back by weak literacy skills; despite strengths in practical work.
- The department uses a wide variety of activities and materials, and makes very good use of ICT.
- Very good assessment strategies support pupils and maximise standards.
- Well thought out lessons, taught with verve and vitality, ensure very good progress.
- Accommodation for food is inadequate, and there is poor ventilation in the ICT suite.

Commentary

81. Pupils join the school with below average standards for their age, and reach average standards by Year 9. A high proportion take GCSE, including a significant number of lower-attaining pupils. GCSE results are below average at grade C or above. However, they are comparable to those of similar schools, and the overall pass rate is broadly average. Results in design and technology are amongst the best in the school, but the high quality of pupils' practical work is not reflected in their written work, and this holds back examination results for most pupils. Higher-attaining pupils achieve very well; in 2003, a group of 18 pupils took GCSE in Year 10; all passed, and 14 gained a C grade or better, one gaining an A*. Taking practical and written work together, standards in Year 11 are broadly average. Overall, achievement is very good from pupils' starting points, particularly in their creative and practical work.
82. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have outstanding expertise, and are committed to enabling all pupils to do well. Individual lessons are very well planned, using schemes of work that are exciting, innovative and fun. Pupils are supported by very thorough assessment which uses criteria very well to help raise standards. They make very good progress because they have clear instructions on how to succeed and are helped to concentrate by very clear demonstrations and explanations. Teachers support pupils very effectively, treat them with respect and give praise, which raises self-esteem. This encourages them to work even harder and more effectively so learning improves. The working atmosphere in the department is purposeful, successful and happy. Nevertheless, achievement in examinations is hampered by weak literacy skills that prevent pupils from doing themselves justice. The department does much to help them with this problem, and its support includes attractive literacy work pads, with key words and targets printed on to them so that pupils can use them in their work. This is not enough, however, to tackle long-standing weaknesses that affect all of the pupils' work across the school.
83. Leadership is excellent. The joint post holders work very closely together and share a common passion to drive up standards and give every pupil education of the best possible quality. They develop innovative models of the curriculum to improve motivation and pupils' interest, and this ratchets up standards. Assessment is woven into each teaching plan and new projects are developed that are interesting and enjoyable, yet give good challenge and are closely matched to National Curriculum requirements. Organisation and management are very good. Staff work together as a fully integrated team, and new staff are very well inducted. On the other hand, accommodation in textiles, and particularly food, needs refurbishment because facilities do not enable teachers to reflect modern working practice. The specialist computer room is well equipped, but becomes overheated and unpleasant. It needs proper ventilation.
84. The department's team of dedicated and talented teachers provide the school with models of good practice, and the pupils a challenging and yet caring ethos. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design was inspected fully, and provision for drama was sampled.

85. Work sampled in **drama** was good. Lessons are well planned, and use themes ranging from familiar soap operas and melodramas to the work of Breughel. Teachers work effectively to engage pupils and keep them working hard, and good organisation allows older pupils to help younger ones, for example, by demonstrating techniques. The subject is led and managed well, and the scheme of work is very well thought out.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective teaching leads to above average standards and very good achievement.
- The curriculum is very carefully planned and evaluated.
- Girls reach significantly higher standards than boys.
- Leadership, management and teamwork are highly effective.
- Pupils use a wide range of materials, but there is too little use of ICT.

Commentary

86. Pupils begin with below average standards. Throughout Years 7 to 9, they produce work of very good quality, and make substantial progress in developing knowledge, skill and understanding in art. For example, in Year 7, the maturity and subtlety of tone, line and proportion that pupils apply to their shell drawings is built on and developed so that by Year 9 all pupils have achieved above average standards. GCSE results for 2003 were below average but in line for those of similar schools. However, work seen and predicted grades for 2004 show significantly higher standards with the current Year 10 and 11 groups. These pupils have strong capabilities in drawing and colour composition and produce articulate and sensitive collages and printmaking. Sketchbooks contain sustained investigation of artists' work with imaginative responses. Three-dimensional work, mostly based on the human figure, is stimulated by different cultures, including African and Australian Aboriginal art. The small number of boys who choose the course reach significantly lower standards than the girls. Nevertheless, overall achievement in the department is very good.
87. Teaching, by a very effective and highly motivated team, is very good. This overcomes the challenge to learning from the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils and as a result pupils work consistently hard and make very good progress. The programme of lessons is meticulously planned and continually reviewed and made more effective. The teachers work exceptionally well as a team, having excellent subject knowledge and pupil management skills. Effective learning is secured by very good teacher-pupil relationships, marked by mutual respect and trust. Assessment of coursework and homework is thorough and critical but always includes praise and encouragement. There is, however, too little use of ICT throughout the department.
88. The subject leader provides a clear educational philosophy for the department, complemented by excellent self-evaluation and practical innovation by the team. Resources are very well organised and deployed. Accommodation is excellent, in a spacious, well-lit art block. Display in the art area is excellent, mainly featuring pupils' achievements. Since the last inspection there have been very good improvements in the range of learning opportunities, and in standards and achievement.

Music

Provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils have good attitudes to music and enjoy the subject.
- Pupils have good skills in some aspects of music, but the range of their skills is limited.
- More consistent planning and assessment are needed to raise standards and achievement.
- There is too little opportunity to use ICT.

Commentary

89. GCSE results were below average in 2003. The standard of work seen during the inspection was also below average. Achievement is satisfactory among all groups of students in view of their starting points in Year 7.
90. Pupils show good understanding and knowledge of keywords. They perform confidently on keyboards, but their performing skills are limited due to lack of attention to phrasing and fingering. Year 9 pupils could play simple chords to a reggae rhythm. Little evidence of singing was seen during the inspection. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils showed good understanding of compositional techniques but some pupils found difficulty in composing a fanfare using notation. Pupils generally have good attitudes towards music lessons.
91. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and the best teaching is very good. Lessons are generally well structured, with good pace and clear expectations. Teachers know the subject well, and practical tasks are well structured so that pupils are kept on task as much as possible. Good use is made of the time available. Where teaching is very good, lessons are very well organised, explanations are very clear, and the tasks pupils are given are particularly well thought out to offer challenge and support to all in the class. In one unsatisfactory lesson, a lack of clarity in explanations and weak class management led to inadequate learning. There is good provision for developing pupils' literacy skills but the opportunities to use computers are very limited in Years 7-9 and 10 and 11.
92. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department appointed in September 2003 is developing strategies to raise achievement throughout the department. However, schemes of work offer an outline of issues to be covered, and would contribute more to learning if they were more closely linked to the National Curriculum and to arrangements for assessment. These are in the early stages of development and do not yet provide an accurate and comprehensive record of pupils' skills. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and strategies are in hand to widen the appeal of these to a wider range of pupils. Over a hundred pupils have instrumental and vocal lessons in school and the department is involved in the community through concerts and an annual musical production. Pupils study a good range of music from a variety of cultures. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. While accommodation is still unsuitable for the subject, teaching has shown significant improvement, particularly in the best lessons.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons well using a good progression of activities.
- The department is led and managed well.

- Predicted GCSE grades and work during the inspection indicate that standards are rising.
- Attitudes to learning are good because pupils enjoy lessons.
- Extra-curricular provision is good; pupils have achieved success in competitions.
- Tasks need to be differentiated in order to provide the right level of challenge to all pupils.
- Lesson time gives insufficient time to develop objectives.
- Outdoor facilities are in poor condition and are dangerous in places.

Commentary

93. Standards are broadly average in Year 9, and above average in Years 10 and 11, both in the GCSE course and in the National Curriculum. GCSE results are improving, and are above average overall, though the relatively small number of girls taking GCSE do significantly better than boys. Achievement is good.
94. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good teaching in Year 10. Well-structured lessons enable pupils to develop skills and apply them to games. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and question pupils effectively. In all lessons teachers have an excellent relationship with pupils, who in turn behave well and enjoy PE. Where the teaching is very good, pupils have a very wide range of learning opportunities and develop skills in a range of roles, such as teacher, coach and official. In most lessons, however, there is room to develop more variety in teaching and learning styles need to be developed across the school so that pupils can become independent learners. A few lessons lacked pace and rigour when teachers spent too long giving instructions and organising groups.
95. The department is well led and managed. This is a strong department, working well together, for example, by covering absences from its own staff wherever possible. Clear policies are in place. The head of department has a clear understanding of the development required, but the new scheme of work needs further revision to ensure consistent and even coverage of the full National Curriculum. Assessment procedures are in place but need refining so that pupils are aware of their progress and targets for improvement. Greater consistency in GCSE marking and feedback will enable pupils to be aware of their progress and targets. Good monitoring has informed decisions regarding next year's staffing arrangements, which build on the strengths of the department. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection, especially in standards and participation in Years 10 and 11. However, outdoor accommodation is poor. The sports field has been poorly maintained, and the uneven and potentially dangerous surfaces of court areas need serious attention.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies was inspected fully, and foundation and intermediate courses in health and social care and child development were sampled by observing lessons and analysing pupils' work.

96. In **health and social care**, this showed below average standards in the foundation course, and broadly average standards in the intermediate course. Teaching was good in both courses. Learning was good in the intermediate course. In the foundation course, it was good for average and higher-attaining pupils, who had good attitudes and worked hard, but satisfactory overall as some lower-attaining pupils were not fully committed.
97. The quality of work sampled in **child development** was very good. Standards are below average, but represent very good achievement from students' starting points, which were often very low. Teaching and learning were very good, and the course is very well led and managed, so that all students complete their coursework and can obtain an examination qualification. An outstanding feature is the use of parent and child visitors. Pupils find this highly enjoyable, and it enables them to relate what they learn to the growth and development of real children. Visitors include members of the school staff taking maternity leave; these parents provide an excellent role model for the pupils. Recent examination results have been below average, but

coursework seen during the inspection shows significant improvement. The course provides a very good base for pupils to proceed to the sixth form.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good, and at times very good, teaching stimulates interest and helps pupils to achieve well.
- Written work needs to be more challenging, and the quality of marking needs to be more consistent.
- The use of assessment data as a tool to improve standards is very good.
- Partnerships with local industry need further development.
- Better use needs to be made of ICT as tool to improve learning.

Commentary

98. GCSE results in 2003 were below average, and very few pupils achieved more than a C grade. There was little overall difference in boys' and girls' results, but fewer girls passed with grade C or better, chiefly as a result of lower literacy skills among girls in the year group. The school's analysis of these results shows better than expected value added. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were below average overall, but covered a wide range, and some pupils are working at a well above average standard. During the inspection, no clear differences in standards between boys and girls could be identified. Overall, pupils taking business studies began the course with well below average standards. Achievement in examinations and in work seen during the inspection is therefore good.
99. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and it is very good in the best lessons. In the better lessons, teachers prepare a good range of challenges and encourage pupils to work independently or in groups to solve relevant problems and discuss business situations. These lessons enable pupils to make good progress in acquiring and applying basic business vocabulary. Progress is also helped by the very good assessment procedures employed. Each pupil has been set a realistic GCSE target grade and progress is readily related to these grades; as a result, pupils understand what they need to do to improve. There are, however, some areas where teaching is less effective. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT, and work samples indicate that they rarely use the Internet, for example, to undertake independent research. Though pupils are regularly set written work, they are infrequently set challenging written tasks that will extend their learning and improve their literacy skills. For standards to rise further, more emphasis needs to be placed on the quality of written work set and the way such work is marked. At present, though work is marked regularly, the quality of marking is variable and frequently credits effort rather than achievement.
100. Leadership of the department is satisfactory, and its management is good. Day-to-day planning is good and the use of assessment data is very well established. However, the quality of learning is not enhanced by any curriculum partnerships with local businesses, so simulations presented to the pupils tend to be textbook examples. Overall, satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. The department has undergone considerable change since it was last inspected and has had to endure a period of unsettled staffing. This has now been overcome, standards are on a rising trend and there is good potential for further improvement.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The timetable provides one weekly lesson to encompass both of these areas. These lessons were sampled across the school, and citizenship was inspected fully.

101. The quality of work sampled in **personal, social and health education** lessons other than citizenship showed the same inconsistencies as that in citizenship. It ranged from very good to unsatisfactory, and was unsatisfactory overall.

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Year 9 is mostly good, and the best is excellent.
- There is no specific teaching in Years 7 and 8.
- Subject leadership and co-ordination are weak.
- There is no structured scheme of work, and no provision for assessment.

Commentary

102. Citizenship is taught only to Years 9, 10 and 11 in one lesson per week. Although most lessons in Year 9 are taught by a very experienced teacher, lessons in Years 10 and 11 are taught by a number of non-specialist and temporary teachers. Some of this teaching and learning is unsatisfactory, and it is not effectively co-ordinated.
103. Standards in citizenship are below average and achievement over time is unsatisfactory. Pupils are not taught systematically or effectively the three strands of the subject in sufficient depth or breadth under these arrangements. However, pupils often make clear, often good, progress towards the National Curriculum achievement target in most Year 9 lessons.
104. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall because of weaknesses in the teaching of non-specialist and temporary staff in Years 10 and 11. During the inspection a number of unsatisfactory lessons were seen where behaviour was poor and work was not sufficiently challenging and matched to pupils' abilities. In the best lessons, particularly in Year 9, very good teaching led to a very good level of interest and enthusiasm from the pupils where careful use of questioning challenged pupils' perceptions on decision making and voting.

Example of outstanding practice

An excellent Year 9 lesson on citizenship used a simulated return to home from a desert island to enable pupils to consider the effects of governmental decision-making on their own lives.

After a very rapid recap of the previous lesson about the decisions they took to improve their lives on a desert island, pupils were quickly invited to brainstorm in groups how their town had changed in the last few years. The ensuing discussion was skilfully and expertly handled by the teacher, who drew parallels in the local community and within school and forced pupils to rethink their conception of who the decision makers were locally and how this affected their own lives. Very good comparisons were made with the pupils' own experiences in school in electing new prefects and members to the school council. Pupils were then given a model of a manifesto from the work of a previous class and were given the task of inventing their own political party and manifesto. This the pupils did enthusiastically, ending the lesson with a 'political broadcast' by each group and the class voting on the best manifesto.

105. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory, and there is no direct line of responsibility for the subject. Citizenship was not a National Curriculum subject at the previous inspection and the school has had difficulties in introducing it. The school is aware of this and a review of the provision of citizenship has been instigated.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 9 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	100	80.1	50.0	23.7	50.0	29.9
Biology	4	50.0	65.2	0	11.1	15.0	20.6
Business studies	7	85.7	76.4	14.3	16.3	25.7	26.2
English literature	5	100	85.9	20.0	19.1	36.0	30.2
French	1	0	78.2	0	18.9	0	27.6
German	1	100	81.5	0	19.3	20.0	28.9
History	1	100	80.7	0	19.5	20.0	28.6
Mathematics	10	50.0	61.9	0	17.1	10.0	22.1
Other social studies	1	100	69.7	0	16.7	30.0	24.1
Physics	4	0	68.6	0	14.4	0	22.7
Religious studies	4	100	80.2	0	22.6	35.0	29.8
Sociology	4	100	71.8	25.0	18.4	20.0	25.4
Spanish	3	0	78.5	0	17.7	0	27.3
Sports/PE studies5	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	5	100	98.6	60.0	50.2	92.0	87.5
Biology	4	100	96.4	0	39.2	50.0	78.6
Business studies	6	100	98.7	33.3	36.8	70.0	80.1
Chemistry	4	75.0	97.6	0	49.0	40.0	84.9
English literature	7	100	99.5	28.6	46.5	68.6	86.5
French	2	100	98.8	0	51.5	60.0	87.6
Geography	7	85.7	98.7	0	44.5	57.1	84.0
History	2	100	99.0	50.0	44.6	90.0	84.6
Mathematics	5	100	96.7	20.0	55.6	76.0	88.9

Other languages	1	100	93.8	100	64.5	100.0	93.8
Physics	3	100	96.7	33.3	44.6	66.7	81.7
Religious studies	7	100	98.8	71.4	46.7	88.6	85.6
Sociology	8	75.0	98.2	12.5	44.3	50.0	83.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English was fully inspected, and provision for Spanish and French was sampled.

106. Teaching and learning in **Spanish and French** work sampled were satisfactory, with good features, but teaching groups are much too small to offer satisfactory value for money, or to provide students with enough contact with others to form a satisfactory learning environment. The most recent A-level and AS results in modern languages have been poor. The school has decided to discontinue these subjects from September.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 13, and higher-attaining students achieve very well.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and experience ensure consistently good learning.
- Students work exceptionally hard and take a high level of responsibility for their own learning.
- Careful management has minimised the impact of staffing difficulties.
- There is too little access to ICT in lessons.
- Noise from nearby classes sometimes makes it difficult for students to concentrate.

Commentary

107. Examination results in 2003 were below average at A-level but above at AS. Most of the students taking AS in 2003 have stayed on, and standards in Year 13 are above average. The trend is for standards to be above average, although the size of teaching groups fluctuates. Standards in Year 12 are average.

108. Achievement is good from students' starting points because of the quality of teaching and most students' excellent attitudes and hard work. Some have been awarded the highest possible marks in individual units. Students prepare very well for lessons and often play a leading role by providing presentations. There are more female than male students but there is no evidence of a difference in standards. Higher-attaining students are clearly reaching their full potential in the subject.

109. In Year 12, response to the poetry of Philip Larkin is good and written work shows the ability to write appropriately about key characters in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Teaching is good because of the skills, enthusiasm and dedication of teachers, most of whom are very experienced in teaching at this higher level. Teaching focuses on examination skills as well as on an appreciation of literature and a careful exploration of the social, intellectual and historical background of the texts studied. In Year 13, revision work focuses very well on the structure and themes of the poems and novels studied. Learning is much enhanced by the opportunity for independent learning and the involvement of students in their own assessment. Students are supported well by the careful use of the whiteboard to focus learning, are confident in using websites for research and make good use of the library and theatre visits. Learning is made more difficult, however, by accommodation that does not allow students to discuss issues without interference from work in progress in nearby classrooms. Students use computers for

course work, which is often of an excellent standard, but there are no computer facilities for presentations in the classrooms.

110. Leadership and management are now satisfactory, and advice and guidance through marking of students' work is particularly effective. Staffing problems and classrooms affected by noise have not been allowed to undermine student achievement. Literature is an increasingly popular option for students, and there has been a good level of improvement in provision and standards since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

111. While standards among students joining the sixth form are below average, most have adequate skills in writing and the necessary reading skills for research in academic and vocational subjects. Oral work is good in English literature and in history where students express their views well. Students skim and scan texts efficiently and most students use their drafting and redrafting skills appropriately in writing in all subjects. Business studies students have a good grasp of technical and subject related vocabulary. Writing varies in standard but the majority of students have sufficient skills in language and literacy to ensure at least a pass grade on completion of their course. Teachers in most subjects pay consistent attention to literacy and language development, and provision in health and social care is excellent, particularly for students with English as an additional language. The computer suites and library are used well. Students have appropriate access to subject texts and to good quality fiction, newspapers and periodicals.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good command of the subject.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and relationships are good.
- Good teaching enables students to work in a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere.
- There is too little provision in the department for independent learning.
- The use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

112. A level and AS results in 2002 and 2003 were well below average, but students met their target grades. Progress from GCSE was as expected. The standard of work in Years 12 and 13 during the inspection was below average, and also represented satisfactory achievement. Students have good algebraic skills and collaborate well to produce accurate results. They can apply mathematical knowledge well and are confident and articulate in discussions. Students' overall needs are well met, particularly those with modest GCSE grades.
113. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers plan well and use very good subject knowledge to promote class discussions. Lessons are brisk and purposeful and students respond in a positive manner. Expectations are high and relationships between teachers and students are very good. This teaching approach is well matched to the needs of the students, particularly as their GCSE results reflect a narrower range of skills than those of most A-level students. There are, however, too few opportunities for them to use ICT, to develop investigative skills or learn independently. Students in a good Year 13 mathematics lesson showed good understanding of integration by substitution when using equations. Most students agreed that their choice to study mathematics was an appropriate one and recognised its value in support of their other studies.

114. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work well as a team, and the organisation of the department is well oriented to the needs of the students choosing to study mathematics. The department has maintained the good quality of its sixth form work since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

115. There is no planned programme for developing mathematics or numeracy skills in the sixth form. There is, however, satisfactory work in individual departments, including geography, where mathematics plays an important part in the curriculum.

SCIENCE

The school offers Advanced Level courses in human biology and physics. The main focus of the inspection was human biology, and physics was sampled.

116. Only one student was taking **physics** during the inspection, and it is therefore not possible to make a judgment on standards and progress in work seen. Standards have been well below national averages for these two subjects in recent years. In response to these difficulties, the school has decided not to continue to offer these subjects from September 2004.

Human biology

Provision in human biology is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' progress is damaged by mismanagement of the staffing crisis.
- Standards are well below national averages and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are both unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management of the subject is poor.

Commentary

117. Results over the previous two years were well below average, with most results in the range C-E. Grades A to B have been very few, but only half of the students passed at AS level in 2003. However, few students complete their A-level programmes with ungraded results.
118. Current standards remain well below average. Students start their course in Year 12 with a mix of adequate and borderline grades from their GCSE examinations. Achievement for the current students is unsatisfactory because too many students still have significant gaps in knowledge. Students now in Year 13 lack thorough knowledge even for work covered recently. Their use of technical terms is not precise enough, and their understanding lacks the detail expected for Advanced Level. Current Year 12 students have major gaps in knowledge and understanding. This is because their chance to achieve has been damaged by mismanagement, resulting in an insufficient and unreliable teaching programme.
119. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Too little is done to give a clear structure to the work. Students are not led to work independently and collaboratively. Students' application and productivity are not promoted securely because they are not given sufficient indications of what they need to do to improve. At times these elements of teaching are handled satisfactorily but not often enough to resolve the weaknesses in achievement. Useful resources are available but some ICT resources are unreliable. Students report, correctly, that they have reasonable access to study areas with suitable ICT. Overall, students are not sufficiently confident and interested in the work they are offered, and inspection evidence confirmed that they have very good reason to be dissatisfied.

120. Serious weaknesses in leadership and management are preventing the school from offering a satisfactory course in the subject. Communication with and guidance to students are inadequate, and difficulties caused by the shortage of skilled science teachers have not been managed effectively. The quality of provision now is well below that reported in the previous inspection report. Then overall progress was judged satisfactory for a fuller programme of biology, chemistry and physics.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

121. It was not possible to observe teaching and learning during the inspection as the key skills course, which is the only course currently offered, had already finished. Provision was therefore sampled by analysis of students' work and of results on this course. This sampling indicated significantly below average standards and very limited achievement. Of those students studying Key Skills in Information Technology only half gained Level 1 accreditation, and a very few Level 2. Some course work inspected showed that those students completing their course were able to apply ICT to workplace contexts, conceive and document solutions and produce work of a good standard. This good work, however, needs to be considered alongside the low numbers of students completing the course. The school has recognised that this provision is unsuccessful and the course has been discontinued. An alternative programme is not yet in place, but the leadership and management structure for any future work is satisfactory and in place.

Information technology across the curriculum in the sixth form

122. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in the sixth form is very patchy and underdeveloped. Work in business studies is greatly hampered by old equipment. Lack of ICT resources inhibits use in subjects such as history, biology, art, English and modern languages; in health and social care, teachers make excellent use of available resources, but some equipment is not in working order. Computers in the library support internet access which is used for research in subjects such as English and history. Work in technology is much better, with well-developed use of specialised applications. This is the one department in the school (other than ICT) with a well-equipped internet-linked specialist ICT room. Work in subjects across the school is restricted as the number of computers falls well short of the government target ratio and there are too few data projectors and interactive whiteboards in subject teaching areas.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is boosted by students' good attitudes.
- Day-to-day management is good and curriculum planning is improving.
- Teachers and students have too few opportunities to use ICT.
- Limited opportunities to learn outside lessons restrict learning, particularly for lower-attaining students.
- Numbers are too small to provide satisfactory value for money.

Commentary

123. In 2003, results at A level were above average. This marked a significant improvement on well below average results in 2002. Very small numbers of students study history in the sixth form; no candidates were entered in 2002 and only one in 2003.

124. Standards during the inspection were broadly average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, and achievement from students' GCSE results is satisfactory. By Year 13, most students' writing and analytical skills show satisfactory development, but all students have weak knowledge and understanding of the work of key historical writers in modules they have studied.
125. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with students and motivate those of average and higher attainment well. Literacy skills are well supported but numerical skills less so. Teachers use debate and discussion well, for example in identifying key factors which led to military success in Operation Barbarossa and the Normandy landings. However, students do not have enough opportunity to undertake Internet research or to analyse statistical data using ICT, and there is too little enrichment through visits to historical sites or visiting speakers. Male and female students told inspectors that they were appropriately supported, but felt they had too few opportunities to use ICT, and that they would benefit from more detailed guidance on study.
126. Leadership is satisfactory, and day-to-day management is good. Teachers communicate well, though self-evaluation arrangements are not fully in place. There is good emphasis on students' personal historical interests and students appreciate the choice of modules they are offered, although this contributes to the very small size of teaching groups. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Resources are well matched to the learning needs of students but support for study has been insufficiently addressed.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Experienced teachers provide continuity for new and inexperienced staff.
- Students use ICT well to present coursework enquiries and for personal research.
- There is insufficient focus on developing teaching and learning to raise standards.
- Lower-attaining students have underdeveloped skills in analysis and evaluation.

Commentary

127. A and AS Level results in 2003 were well below average. Standards during the inspection were slightly better, and below average overall. Achievement is satisfactory in view of students' GCSE results. The highest-attaining students display evidence of wide reading in their research tasks. These students use specialist terminology expertly and can recognise complexity in their analysis. Investigations of traffic congestion and of sustainable development are well organised and logical with detailed analysis. Lower-attaining students make good use of ICT to provide annotated digital photographic evidence of enquiries into recreationally caused erosion. They can explain differences in hazard issues in areas at different levels of economic development but do not take full account of magnitude or spatial distribution. All students present work well but for less competent students evaluation and conclusions are sometimes limited, with some writing that is not well developed, and subject to grammatical errors. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory in Year 13 but insufficiently developed in Year 12.
128. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching during the inspection was satisfactory overall, and students' folders indicated satisfactory teaching. Marking often contained useful annotated comments which indicate how students should improve their responses. Essays, however, are not always completed. Coverage of content is well planned, but pupils often include too much case study material and too little analysis of it. The most competent students are good independent learners. There is often an imbalance between fact gathering and analysis and evaluation by less competent students. Relationships with students are good and teachers

encourage an interest in human and physical geography. Year 13 students are used to cooperating together to enhance their learning. Year 12 students are not taught to work as a group, or to develop their learning through discussion and debate. Some teaching does not pay sufficient regard to the specific requirements of the examination, and this led to one unsatisfactory lesson during the inspection. ICT is used for some teaching but a video projector is not used to enhance teaching.

129. The department is satisfactorily led and managed, but the focus has been on continuity and not on improving standards. Experienced teachers support new and inexperienced staff through informal discussion and advice. However, some new teachers have had too few opportunities for professional development in sixth form teaching; this was the cause of small amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection. The breadth of the curriculum is restricted by limited fieldwork opportunities. Monitoring is limited and there is no set timetable for observing teachers, or for scrutinising work. Provision in geography is very similar to that at the last inspection, and further development is needed to adapt it fully to the needs of students.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Experienced teachers provide very good teaching and personal support to all students.
- Students are enthusiastic and produce very good coursework portfolios of an improving standard.
- Students are closely involved in the evaluation of their own work.
- There is a high examination pass rate among students who begin with low GCSE grades.
- Students make very good use of ICT in coursework.
- There is excellent leadership and direction, combined with very thoughtful and effective management.

Commentary

130. The number of students taking the subject is too small to allow trends in examination results to be detected – there were, for example, no A-level candidates last year. However, the pattern of achievement seen during the inspection was very good. Many students move into sixth form study with a very limited portfolio of GCSEs at C grade or above; almost all achieve a graded result in their examination, though A and B grades are rare.
131. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is well prepared with effective teaching materials, real expertise and a genuine commitment from the staff. In addition, pupils have very good relationships with each other and their teachers. This enables them to have confidence in their work and to readily accept the advice and criticism. In consequence work rapidly improves. All lessons start well. The revision lessons seen were conducted at a good pace with high expectation of both standards of theoretical, design and practical work and behaviour. Students respond very well. Discussions involve the whole class and all students are expected to work out the answers to problems posed by the teacher and discuss and share their answers. Some students are quite reticent, but teachers are sensitive and encouraging. Learning in these lessons is very good, and students are becoming well prepared for the forthcoming examination.
132. Students show great maturity in their coursework folios. Teachers have evaluated their work with them and encouraged them to improve their design solutions. The standards of coursework are above average in the practical work, including an exciting range of chairs with good attention to quality. Folios are very well presented, with much use of ICT to provide a stimulating read.

Research is strong, and the internet well used to provide a range of resources that are well analysed. What is weaker is the specification of the problem to be solved and this early analysis then fails to provide sufficient rigour for the testing and evaluation sections. Computer-aided design and manufacture are well featured and many students have real expertise in the high level ProDeskTop program.

133. There is excellent leadership of the team of committed teachers and day-to-day matters are managed very well. There are high aspirations by staff and students alike. The accommodation in terms of workshop space with appropriate machines and equipment is good. Computer resources have improved and are sufficient to meet the specification requirements for learning about computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). Extensive and very effective improvements have been made since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know the subject in depth and provide high levels of intellectual challenge.
- Students develop high levels of knowledge and skill in drawing and painting.
- Students make very good use of observation, and understand visual language.
- Standards are above average in all courses.
- There is too little use of all forms of ICT and electronic media.

Commentary

134. Most students in the small A-level and AS level groups pass with A-C grades. This represent very good achievement for these students, as most enter the sixth form with modest GCSE grades in art. In the GNVQ course the intermediate qualification also provides significant achievement for each individual. The high standards are exemplified by the vivid and powerful portrait work in painting and sculpture by A-level and AS students. GNVQ students have designed and constructed very good stage props and scenery for school productions and a local primary school as assessed coursework.
135. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their expert knowledge of the subject and examination requirements to offer carefully planned challenges to students, based on meticulously planned schemes of work. They create a mature, adult working atmosphere, providing continuous support and guidance while promoting independent thinking and creativity. Students' work is carefully assessed, with close involvement of the students themselves. As a result of this carefully focused teaching, students develop strong understanding of artistic techniques and their effects, and know how to improve their own work.
136. As in the main school, leadership and management are very good. The head of department has the experience and vision to provide clear and very effective direction, based on a well considered and comprehensive curriculum strategy. Other teachers complement this with practical innovation, standardisation work and the beginnings of ICT development, although ICT remains seriously under-used overall. Very good accommodation includes a dedicated sixth form studio, in which work in progress is undisturbed. General art resources are very well organised and deployed. Students are able to purchase high quality materials at a discount through the department. The department has built very well on the strengths identified in the last inspection report.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at A level and AS are improving as a consequence of good teaching.
- The subject is popular and is attracting an increasing proportion of both male and female students.
- Students have good attitudes, and a high proportion progress from AS to A-level.
- There are too few learning opportunities beyond lessons for AS and A-level students.
- Poor ICT facilities are a significant barrier to learning.

Commentary

137. There has been some fluctuation in business studies results in recent years. A-level results were average in 2003, and AS results above average, though results in AVCE were below average. These variations are partly the result of a large number of staff changes, which had been stabilised by the time of the inspection. Standards in foundation and intermediate courses are in line with national averages and students acquire satisfactory knowledge and understanding of business processes. The standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly average in each course inspected. This reflects good overall achievement from students' starting points, which are below average, particularly among those taking advanced courses.
138. Teaching and learning are good. There is strong subject expertise, lessons are well planned and students want to succeed and work hard. A particular strength is that students are allowed to select study modules which most appeal to them, and courses are well matched to the needs of learners. Opportunities to learn beyond the classroom, however, are under-developed and the department does not take the existing part-time employment of students sufficiently into account in curriculum planning. Learning opportunities for foundation and intermediate students are satisfactorily supported by work experience.
139. The subject is soundly led and well managed. Marking is good and there are very good systems in place for tracking student performance. This has, however, yet to impact fully on informing the development of teaching and learning strategies, and the departmental improvement plan does not focus sufficiently on raising standards. With the exception of access to ICT, students feel well supported by welcoming and knowledgeable staff.
140. Improvement from the last inspection has been satisfactory. With the exception of ICT, resources have been improved significantly, and the range of courses has been extended to meet the needs of more students. There have been substantial staffing changes. Experienced staff are now established and are generating enthusiasm among students. Business studies is an improving and increasingly popular subject.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision for health and social care is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent practical and theoretical knowledge of the subject.
- Teaching is very well adapted to the full range of students' learning needs.
- Achievement is very high from students' starting points.

- There is excellent provision for language, literacy and the use of ICT.
- Students with English as an additional language achieve very well.
- Excellent leadership and management create a strong climate of achievement.

Commentary

141. Most students begin with GCSE grades that are well below average for sixth form work, and most have English as an additional language. The overall standard of written and practical work seen during the inspection was broadly average, and often above average in written coursework, where students make very good use of wordprocessing to produce work that is well-organised, accurate and attractively presented.
142. These standards represent excellent achievement. Students' high levels of commitment to the course, their detailed attention to information and guidance provided by teachers, and their consistent independent work enable all to meet course requirements and give very good scope for higher-attaining students to develop their understanding of theoretical issues. The course makes an important contribution to achievement in spoken and written language and to the practical application of ICT.
143. Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and understanding, and have extensive experience of teaching the subject in further and higher education. Their adaptation of these qualities to ensure that the course provides the right balance of challenge and support to all students is excellent. Explanations of theoretical points are lucid, and they are thoroughly embedded in practical tasks, so that students experience a wide and interesting range of teaching and learning styles. Excellent relationships in lessons, and finely judged use of time and resources, allow students time to think and to express and develop their ideas. The quality of individual guidance to students of all abilities is outstanding, and the quality of coursework assessment has been commended by the examining board. The strong sense of purpose generated by the teachers, combined with students' experience of success, makes an excellent contribution to their confidence and personal development, particularly in moral and social areas.
144. Excellent leadership and management have developed a course that meets the particular needs of all students to a very high standard. There is a strong sense of teamwork and mutual support between the teachers, including very effective support for a dyslexic teacher. Teachers have built an outstanding collection of resources in a short time, and make excellent use of ICT in presenting lessons. The course is attracting an increasing number of students, and is set to play a key role in the development of the sixth form. The course was not offered during the last inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

145. These programmes had finished for the year by the time of the inspection. Discussions with the acting headteacher and head of the sixth form, however, indicated that they were kept to a single lesson per week in order to balance the budget. Students told inspectors that they did not have enough additional activities beyond their lessons, and inspectors and the acting headteacher agree with this.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

