

INSPECTION REPORT

**CHRIST THE KING CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE**

Southport

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104964

Headteacher: Mr John Gannon

Lead inspector: Robin Coulthard

Dates of inspection: 15th – 19th March 2004

Inspection number: 264869

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1175
School address:	Stamford Road Southport Merseyside
Postcode:	PR84EX
Telephone number:	01704 565121
Fax number:	01704 550447
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Alan Rayner
Date of previous inspection:	11 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Christ the King Catholic High School is a voluntary-aided comprehensive high school and sixth form centre. Pupils enter the school with above-average attainment overall, but independent tests conducted by the school indicate that a higher proportion of pupils than expected is below its chronological age in reading and below average in verbal reasoning.

Of the 1175 pupils, 138 are in the sixth form, which is below the average number for a sixth form. There are similar numbers of boys and girls in each year, except in Year 11 where there are 90 boys and 115 girls.

The school population is very stable with few pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual time. Very few pupils are of other than White-British origin, and none of these is at an early stage of learning English. Pupils' social backgrounds are average.

The school has technology college status. It has Schools Achievement (2001, 2002); Record of Quality Achievement – Work Experience, Education Business Partnership, and Eco School awards. The school is involved with local primary schools in connection with its outreach work as a technology college, and is a provider of adult education in ICT and other areas. School premises are used for community activities, including sports training, scouts and guides.

A smaller than average proportion of pupils has identified special educational needs. These relate mostly to dyslexia, moderate learning difficulty and emotional and behavioural problems. The proportion with statements of special educational needs is two thirds of that found nationally.

The school offers a good range of academic and vocational sixth form courses. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities	
			Main school	Sixth Form
11746	Robin Coulthard	Lead inspector		
9537	Caroline Marden	Lay inspector		
33324	Jo Fullwood	Team inspector	English	English
5910	Peter Fletcher	Team inspector	Mathematics	
32779	Chris Fallon	Team inspector	Science	
32785	Wynne Allt	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	Information and communication technology
32329	Andrew Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
18663	Phil Birchell	Team inspector	Geography	History
33034	Alan Rogers	Team inspector	History	Business studies
15075	Bryan Stephens	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	French
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music	
30800	Betty Colley	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
23307	Neil McDonough	Team inspector	Physical education	
4922	Mike Driver	Team inspector		Biology
32229	Mary Comer	Team inspector	Citizenship	Leisure and tourism
30702	Paul Bowyer	Team inspector		Mathematics

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Christ the King is a satisfactory school providing satisfactory value for money. Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory as they enter with standards that are above average and maintain these throughout the school. Achievement is good in the sixth form. Attitudes are good throughout the school. The leadership of the headteacher is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- The Catholic ethos of the school promotes very good personal development, and relationships are very good
- Results are above average throughout the school
- Pupils achieve very well in modern foreign languages and geography
- The school is developing well as a technology college
- Teaching is satisfactory but too little is very good or excellent; in the sixth form teaching is good
- Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained and teaching focuses well on examination requirements. Teaching is similar overall to last time. The school has successfully tackled the key issues of the last report, but has made inadequate progress in embedding the recommendations of the Key State 3 Strategy in teaching across the school. Policies for the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum are inconsistently applied. Accommodation has improved and is now good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards on entry to the school are above average and pupils maintain these standards. In Year 9 national tests, results were well above average overall. Results in English were well above average, while results in mathematics and science were above average. Current standards in Year 9 are above average overall and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are well above average in geography throughout the main school. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. Results were above average in English language, they were well above average in science for pupils taking the double science award, and were average in mathematics. Results were well above average in geography and above average in other subjects, except for physical education, where results were significantly below average, and ICT, where a change of syllabus led to lower results than previously. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Current standards in Year 11 are average. In Year 13, results, particularly those of boys, were better than in 2002 and rose from average to above average. Current standards are average and students are achieving well.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good and very well promoted through the positive impact of the Catholic ethos. Attitudes, behaviour and punctuality are good. Attendance is very good in the main school, and good in the sixth form.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

This is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a comparatively small amount that is of high quality. The school is currently facing staffing problems caused by a high incidence of short and longer-term staff absence. Pupils learn willingly and their efficiency as learners reflects the quality of teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a thorough knowledge of examination requirements; relationships are very good. Teaching is particularly good in modern foreign languages and geography. Good developments are taking place in the teaching of several subjects are a result of initiatives related to the technology college status. Teaching is more effective where the recommendations of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy have been incorporated. Overall, pupils are learning and achieving satisfactorily. Teaching is good in the sixth form, with more that is of high quality. Learning and achievement are good, but some students are passive, which limits the value of discussion in some small sets.

The curriculum is good. The range of academic and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, provides well for the needs of pupils. Extra-curricular enrichment is very good. Pupils and students are very well supported and guided by their teachers. Pupils and parents particularly appreciate the work of the lay chaplain. Links with parents are good and they support the school well. Very good links with local colleges and partner schools enhance the curriculum. The school does very good work with local primary schools as part of its technology college outreach work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are in the school are satisfactory and in the sixth form are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is good. The leadership of other key staff is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. The work of the governing body is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Management is satisfactory in the main school overall. School systems run smoothly, but the development of teaching recently has not been as effective as it should have been. The effectiveness of management varies between subjects; it is satisfactory in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and satisfactory overall. The school does very well for students who are gifted and talented and makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school. They consider their children make good progress and are well taught. They are expected to work hard and are encouraged to become mature. Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with problems. A few have concerns about behaviour, and some do not think that the school seeks their views enough. The pupils' views closely matched those of their parents, except that they think that the school is interested in pupils' views. Both groups consider that any bad behaviour or bullying is effectively dealt with and they praised the induction process highly.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the effectiveness of monitoring of teaching and learning
- Develop the effectiveness of teaching where there are weaknesses

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Establish citizenship more thoroughly as a distinct subject

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective sixth form that gives good value for money. A wide curriculum choice enables students to combine academic and vocation courses that suit their needs and wishes. Students are taught well and achieve well because of their good attitudes to learning. The sixth form is well led and managed. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

The main strengths are

- Examination results are above average
- Good achievement resulting from good teaching
- The choice of courses suits students' wishes and needs
- Relationships are very good and students make very good role models for younger pupils
- Procedures for inducting students to the sixth form and preparing them for the next stage of education or employment are very effective

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Satisfactory in English language and in English literature . Very good in French where standards are above average and teaching is innovative
Mathematics	Satisfactory
Science	Good in biology
Information and communication technology	Good in ICT
Humanities	Very good in history where standards are above average in all aspects
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	There was no focus subject in this area
Visual and performing arts and media	There was no focus subject in this area
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Very good in leisure and tourism with very effective use of ICT for research and presentation
Business	Good in business education
Health and social care	There was no focus subject in this area
General education	There was no focus subject in this area

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

These are very good. Students can seek advice on any issue. The induction procedure is very supportive and guidance about post-18 opportunities is thorough and very well-informed. Students' views are valued and the sixth form council provides a useful forum for discussing matters of concern.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The head of sixth form provides **good leadership** and leads an effective team. The sixth form has developed well since the last inspection. **Management is effective**. The curriculum is well managed and the school works strenuously to maintain a wide range of courses in response to the needs and wishes of students. Monitoring of students' work and overall sixth form provision is good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students' views are in the main very positive. They enjoy being in the sixth form. They respect the teachers' subject knowledge, find the teaching challenging and regard teachers' assessment of their work as helpful. Teachers are accessible and students are treated with respect. A minority expressed reservations about the advice they received about courses, about the presence in the school of an adult who knew them well, and about the range of enrichment activities, but inspectors judged provision in these areas to be very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

GCSE results are well above average. Standards in Year 9 are above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards in the core subjects are above average. Standards in Year 11 are average.

Main strengths

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average
- GCSE results in 2003 were well above average
- Current standards in Years 9 are above average

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36 (34)	33 (33)
mathematics	37 (36)	35 (35)
science	35 (34)	34 (33)

There were 214 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above the national average, as they have been consistently in recent years. Results in English and science rose from the previous year. English results were the strongest. They were well above average, with a proportion gaining Level 7 that was significantly above the national average. In comparison with similar schools, that is, schools whose pupils gained similar results at the end of Year 6, results were below average overall. They were average in English and well below in mathematics and science. The school exactly met the targets it had set itself of 82 per cent for the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or above in mathematics. The school failed to meet its targets for the percentage gaining Level 5 or above in English and science, with 76 per cent gaining this level in English when the target was 85 per cent, and 75 per cent gaining Level 5 or above in science when the target was 82 per cent. Girls have performed better than boys in English over the last three years, and their results are well above average for girls nationally. In mathematics and science, boys and girls have performed similarly. The trend of improvement in results over five years has been below the national trend.

2. Standards seen during the inspection were above average overall. They were well above average in geography and history and above average in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, ICT and music. Standards were average in design and technology, art and design and physical education. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their capability and the progress made since they joined the school. Pupils' achievement is very good in modern foreign languages and geography. Standards are below expectation in citizenship. Pupils' achievement is adversely affected in some areas at present by unusually high short and longer-term absences of staff.

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	67 (62)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	89 (89)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36 (36)	35 (35)

There were 190 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. In 2003, a well above average proportion of pupils gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, showing a five per cent rise on the previous year. An above average proportion gained one or more passes at A* to G. The proportion gaining five or more passes at A* to G was average. The school exceeded the targets it had set. On average over the last three years, boys' and girls' results have been well above average at grades A* to C, with girls performing better than boys. In terms of the average point score, results in English were slightly above the national average, while results in mathematics were slightly below. In science, results for those taking the double award were significantly above average, but approximately half of those who took the GNVQ course gained accreditation. Results in geography were well above average. Other subjects were slightly above the national average points score, except design and technology, where results were average. In ICT, the percentage gaining A* to C was 15 per cent below the national figure. The trend in the school's average total GCSE/GNVQ point score per pupil was above the national trend. Standards in citizenship are below average because citizenship is not yet established as a distinct subject.

4. Standards of work seen in Year 11 were average overall, and well above average in geography, above average in modern foreign languages, history, art and music, and average in other subjects, including the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In relation to their attainment at the beginning of Year 10, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, and best in modern foreign languages and geography as a result of very good teaching.

5. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve as well as other pupils because of the support they receive. Several pupils with special educational needs go on to achieve success in GCSE examinations or are helped to achieve other awards such as those listed under the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).

Sixth form

Results in the sixth form are above average. Current standards are average and students are achieving well. The small numbers in some groups make comparisons between subjects and between results from year to year of little significance.

Main strength

- Results in 2003 were above average overall; they were well above average in geography and above average in history

Commentary

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	89 (88)	92 (90)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	24 (18)	36 (36)
Average point score per pupil	254 (237)	253 (255)

There were 54 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Results in 2003 were above average and significantly higher than in the previous year, when they were average. Results were well above average in geography and above average in history. In general studies, German and other social studies, results were average. In art and design, biology, communication studies and English literature, results were below average, and in English language, results were well below average. In other subjects, numbers in the groups were too small for meaningful national comparisons to be made. Results reflect the varying abilities of the groups from year to year. The small size of groups means that comparisons between different years' results are insignificant.

7. Currently, standards are well above average in French, and above average in English literature, history and business. Standards are average in English language, ICT and leisure and tourism, and below average in mathematics. Students are achieving very well in relation to their attainment when they joined the sixth form in French, history and leisure and tourism. They are achieving well in biology, ICT and business. Achievement in English and mathematics, is satisfactory. In most subjects where comparisons could be made, boys and girls gained similar results.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Their attendance and personal development are very good. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are all very good.

Main strengths

- The Catholic ethos of the school promotes very good personal development
- The school benefits from very good relationships within the school community
- Students are very positive about the school
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well around the school site
- Very good attendance

Commentary

8. The strengths in attitudes, behaviour and attendance seen in the last inspection have been maintained. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved.

9. Students generally like school. Many of them take the opportunity to participate in out-of-school activities, for example by belonging to the different sports teams. In lessons, students usually listen well and respond quickly to instructions. They work hard and concentrate well. In the few lessons where attitudes were less good it was because the teaching did not engage them. In these cases, students tend to chatter amongst themselves and show little interest in the lesson.

10. Behaviour around the school site is good. Pupils are naturally polite, helpful to visitors, for example by offering to help them find their way around. Even in the very congested stairwells, pupils usually wait patiently. Pupils do not think bullying is an issue in the school and all those spoken to felt that if an incident did occur it would be swiftly dealt with. There are good procedures for promoting good behaviour and the option of a time out room is available for students to work in if their behaviour is disrupting the learning of others. However, the positive behaviour policy is effective and no bad behaviour was observed in lessons.

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	1152	32	1
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0

No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0
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11. Attendance in the main school is very good and the school closely monitors all absences, usually contacting parents on the first day of absence if they do not know why the student is not present. This contributes to the low level of unauthorised absence.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.2	School data	0.1
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.

12. The school's Catholic ethos strongly underpins pupils' personal development and pervades all aspects of school life. The school places a high importance on pupils' spiritual development. Assemblies and form time make a strong contribution to this area. Good opportunities are provided across the curriculum, for example, for reflecting on other peoples problems in different parts of the world. The school chaplain is available for pupils and organises themed retreats for them. Her work is much appreciated by the pupils. Pupils are very well aware of their social and moral obligations. They enthusiastically raise significant amounts of money for different charities. They are currently raising money for water aid to provide a water pump and build a toilet block for a school in Tamil Nadu.

13. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to work together and this contributes to the very good relationships throughout the school community. Pupils cooperate well and willingly help each other. Throughout the curriculum, opportunities are provided for pupils to explore moral issues such as the plight of the Jews in Germany during the Nazi regime to the near impossible decisions planners have to make when considering what services are most important to supply to a Favela. Pupils' involvement in the different charities makes them aware of many different cultures. Many subjects also help to develop pupils understanding of European and other cultures. For example, in French, pupils study the Francophile world, in English, poetry from other cultures and, in history, a Black American project.

Sixth Form

Students have good attitudes to lessons overall. Students' personal development is very good because of the very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships within the school community
- Students are very positive about the school
- Some students can be passive in lessons

Commentary

14. Students' positive attitudes to the school have been maintained as has the provision for students' personal development.

15. Students speak well of their school and are pleased with their decision to join the sixth form. In most lessons, they have very good attitudes to work and are keen to do well. In a few lessons, some students are sometimes passive and only reluctantly answer teachers' questions. This problem inhibits students' learning in some of the very small subject groups because the effectiveness of discussions as a means of developing understanding is reduced.

16. Students' personal development is very good. They readily take on responsibilities both within the school and in the community. For example, students in Year 12 are 'buddies' for students in Year 7 whom the school has identified as likely to benefit from extra support. Students readily take on

community service. Many students appreciatively referred to the very good community spirit within the sixth form.

17. Attendance is good, but the overall figure for last year is distorted by the long-term absence of seven students, six of whom left in the course of the sixth form. Individual attendance is carefully monitored. Punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

This is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form. The learning opportunities provided for pupils and pupils throughout the school are good. The quality and range of enrichment activities is very good. The strong sense of community and the Catholic ethos that underpin the school ensure that pupils and pupils are very well cared for, supported and guided. The school works well with parents and the community and very well with other teaching establishments to promote pupils' development and support their achievement.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The use of assessment is satisfactory overall but the use of assessment information is inconsistent to promote pupils' learning further.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in modern foreign languages and geography
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and relationships with classes are a strength of teaching
- The recommendations of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy have not influenced the development of teaching enough
- Pupils with special educational needs are well taught

Commentary

18. The inspection took place at a time when staffing was adversely affected by a higher than usual incidence of short and longer-term teacher absence. An analysis of the lessons taught during the inspection by permanent members of staff indicated that the quality of teaching was better than the overall figure but remained satisfactory, with a comparatively small amount being very good or excellent.

19. In the context of the overall satisfactory teaching that was seen, some variation between subjects occurred. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good in modern foreign languages and geography. It is good in English, ICT, history and art and satisfactory in other subjects. Teaching is similar in individual subjects in Years 10 and 11, except that it is good in music and satisfactory in English.

20. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are thoroughly familiar with examination requirements. Relationships between teachers and pupils, which are influenced by the school's very good ethos, are very positive. Lessons are carefully planned.

21. Where teachers facilitated very good learning, they made very good use of the technical recommendations contained in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, and used these at all levels in the school. Lessons began with a brisk starter activity to set the pace for learning and to recall and consolidate previous work, often developing pupils' oral skills by purposeful question and answer sessions. Lesson objectives were stated and the teacher's high expectations were made clear to pupils. Resources were of good quality and tasks challenged appropriately pupils over the range of ability within the group. Time was used productively by the use of strict deadlines which kept up the pace of work. Teaching methods were varied, sometimes involving whole-class activities, sometimes paired or individual work. Teachers gave carefully targeted individual assistance quietly so as to preserve a studious atmosphere and ensure that all pupils could make good progress. In

response to this, pupils learned very well, worked with sustained concentration and enjoyed their success.

22. These qualities were evident in a Year 11 French revision lesson, where pupils consolidated their understanding and use of grammar and vocabulary in a topic on types of television programme. The very good resources that stimulated pupils' interest and learning included entertaining cartoons on an OHP depicting sport, 'soaps' and other TV genres. The teacher's enthusiasm for the language was obvious to the class. The class responded with much hard work. Questioning was particularly skilful because the teacher involved pupils other than those who readily volunteered answers. The plenary session at the end indicated that the lesson objectives had been met, giving useful information to guide subsequent planning. A related homework was set in good time before the lesson ended.

23. Teaching and learning are gradually being enhanced by the use of ICT as equipment becomes more available to extend the school's work as a technology college. Very good examples were seen, for example in a very well planned and organised lesson in art, where the expert use of an interactive whiteboard stimulated pupils to create imaginative surreal landscapes from 3-dimensional shapes. As in some other lessons observed, the use of up-to-date technology led to learning and achievement that were well above expectation.

24. Where lessons were satisfactory, some, but not enough, of the qualities outlined above were present. Sometimes, the teaching was dominated by the teacher with little chance for interaction, and this failed to harness the pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Sometimes, the tasks did not fully stretch all pupils with some consequent underachievement, particularly by potentially higher-attaining pupils. Occasionally, the work was pitched too high for pupils to respond realistically to the challenge. Sometimes, objectives were not clear enough to promote good learning.

25. In lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory work was not matched well to pupils' needs and the pace was slow. As a result, pupils were off task and noisy, and made insufficient progress.

26. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes is good because of the support they receive and because teachers know them well and most plan to meet their needs. Some pupils are taught in small, setted groups in English and mathematics to improve literacy and numeracy. Focused support in homework groups, and at lunchtime sessions, gives pupils further opportunities for improvement. Some subject areas, for example geography, adapt targets and relate this well to the subject and this assists pupils to learn very well. This is very good practice and follows guidance in the New Code of Practice for pupils with special needs.

27. Teacher assistants are effective in lessons because there is joint planning for their involvement. Teaching in the learning support department and the learning support unit links well to pupils' needs, and teacher assistants work productively with pupils. All pupils who have special educational needs have individual education plans. The targets in these plans are not always different enough from the expectations of all pupils. Teacher assistants note activities and behaviour they observe during lessons and in the learning support department, but these records do not document achievement or indicate areas for improvement.

28. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are met very effectively, overall, through teachers' planning and through the stimulating additional activities and visits that are provided for them as part of extracurricular enrichment.

29. The assessment of pupils' learning is satisfactory. Pupils' work is marked regularly in most subjects, with supportive comment. In general, marking does not provide enough detailed advice for pupils about how to improve their work. Grades are awarded but these often do not inform pupils how they are doing in relation to national criteria. The school is improving the consistency of assessment practice through clear guidance and an emphasis on departmental monitoring of teaching and learning. Good use is made of ICT to track pupils' progress, agree targets and identify

under-achievement. This is assisting senior management to analyse and compare performance in the different departments.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 122 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (3%)	14 (11%)	50 (41%)	43 (36%)	9 (7%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)

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

Sixth form

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is good. It is carefully linked to examination requirements and contributes well to students’ achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are friendly and supportive and students are keen to succeed
- Teachers’ subject knowledge is very good and lessons are well planned
- The range of stimulating teaching methods used includes effective use of ICT
- Assessment is thorough and provides constructive individual feedback

Commentary

30. Teaching was good overall in the focus subjects. It was very good in French, history and leisure and tourism. As in the main school, relationships are a strength which stimulates students’ interest and commitment and benefits their learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They readily share their enthusiasm for their subjects with students, and are prepared to go the extra mile by giving students extra assistance outside lessons. They plan lessons well to match the needs of students. Lessons have clear objectives and reflect examination requirements well. As a result students of all levels of attainment are well challenged. The pace of lessons is generally good. Teaching methods are good and suitably varied, and are particularly imaginative and stimulating in history.

31. Students learn effectively. They are well motivated and keen to succeed. Relationships with teachers are positive and students are well supported in lessons. Students make good use of ICT for research and presentation and develop good habits in independent study. They benefit from, and appreciate, the good level of individual attention that the generally small size of groups permits. In English and mathematics, students readily engage in lively and productive discussion to further their learning. In some subjects, however, some students tend to be passive and inhibited from joining in discussion.

32. The assessment of students’ learning is good, and is particularly good in business education and modern foreign languages. Most teachers provide students with a high standard of feedback, which gives them a good awareness of their progress and provides them with detailed feedback on how they may improve their work. Assessment is carefully linked to the requirements of the examination boards. The tracking and target-setting procedures are effective and enable students’ performance to be compared against national standards and demonstrate effective progress through their sixth form studies.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 44 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	12 (27%)	23 (52%)	6 (14%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. Very good opportunities are provided for enrichment. Staffing is satisfactory. Accommodation learning resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's Catholic ethos is well embodied in its curriculum
- The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities for all pupils in Years 7 to 9 and a very good range of flexible choices in Years 10 and 11
- The school's technology college status is having a positive effect on development of subjects and equipment
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of citizenship
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided

Commentary

33. The quality and breadth of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are good and most pupils have the opportunity to study a full range of subjects, which includes drama and a second modern language.

34. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good and offers a wide choice of subjects to study at GCSE or GNVQ level with some additional non-accredited courses. In addition to the standard subjects at GCSE, pupils can opt for business and communication systems, drama, child development, media studies and a wide range of technology-based options. Vocational courses include GNVQ intermediate level science, business, information and communication technology (ICT) and manufacturing. Work-related learning is offered in conjunction with Southport College of Further Education. The school offers considerable flexibility of choice in attempting to meet individual pupils' needs.

35. Pupils may take three sciences. In addition, the provision of intermediate GNVQ science has resulted in good results for abler pupils who choose it, but has also resulted in a significant number of lower-attaining pupils gaining no accreditation in science.

36. The school does yet fully comply with its statutory obligation to provide citizenship as an independent subject. Most subjects include elements of citizenship within their schemes of work, but pupils do not study it specifically, nor is their work assessed separately or reported to parents as required.

37. The school has appropriate policies to guide the development of literacy and numeracy.

38. No teaching in personal, social and health education took place during the inspection. However the school provides a thorough programme of teaching, in discrete lessons and through religious education, that supports and extends its very good overall provision for the welfare and guidance of pupils.

39. The extra-curricular provision is very good. A wide variety of clubs and activities meets the interests and needs of pupils. This includes homework clubs for several subjects, sports activities and awards and particularly good lunchtime support in art and several of the technology options. Pupils with special educational needs can receive daily support lunchtime. The music department runs a choir, band and jazz band, which make regular contributions of high quality to the social, cultural and religious life of the school. However, fewer pupils participate than one might expect. The school offers pupils a very good range of trips and visits, including those to Paris, Lourdes, Spain and an exchange visit to America. A number of these benefit both the school's ethos and the curriculum, for example the planned humanities visit to Auschwitz. Pupils have the opportunity to gain the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at the school. English and drama benefit from regular theatre visits, and pupils have participated in theatre workshops.

40. The curriculum is carefully organised to include all pupils. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are very well considered and provided for. Activities additional to the enrichment opportunities open to all pupils are provided for them in many areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils gifted in modern foreign languages have funding for Internet access to on-line journals, as well as money for foreign language magazine subscriptions to develop their language skills. In music, the use of a recording studio enhances the standards achieved by Year 11 pupils. In art, Year 9 pupils develop their skills by attending a one-day photography course and sculpture workshop. History and geography organise a joint fieldwork enrichment program. This is preceded by after-school lessons and followed by a digital photography course, to help them produce a presentation. The pupils make use of this material for providing help for pupils in Years 6 and 7, reinforcing primary links.

41. The school arranges an alternative curriculum to assist some lower-attaining and some disaffected pupils with training for employment; very good links with local colleges and employers benefit these pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are helped to improve their literacy and numeracy skills in intensive courses in small groups within setted groups and in the learning support unit.

42. Pupils with special educational needs benefit greatly from the school's well-trained teacher assistants who assist with some withdrawal from lessons and teach basic skills in small groups. ICT support for this has improved and is developing. Very good support is available for pupils during extra-curricular time.

43. The qualifications of the teaching staff match the subjects well. However, the school is experiencing unusually high staff absence at present. While the school is taking reasonable steps to ensure effective temporary staff this has led to difficulties in some key areas, for example English, where some pupils have had three teachers this year. This is having an impact on the achievement of some pupils.

44. Accommodation is good, and has undergone some very good improvements since the last inspection. Following a fire in 1997, the gymnasium, sports hall and changing rooms have been rebuilt, giving good accommodation for physical education. The science rooms and ICT suites have recently been refurbished, providing a stimulating and up-to-date learning environment. In most curriculum areas, rooms are suited, which helps efficient organisation and gives good opportunities for collaboration within subjects. Storage and office spaces are satisfactory.

45. Resources are good overall. They are good in geography, ICT and physical education. The school is in its second year of additional funding as technology college. So far, this has had a particularly beneficial impact on the accommodation and resources for technology, on the schools' management of data and on the provision and use of computers and interactive whiteboards throughout the school. There are good plans for the use of further funds to include improved assessment practice and open learning via a school intranet. The library is up to date and provides a very good learning and research base with good access to ICT.

Sixth form

The range of learning opportunities in the sixth form is good.

Main strengths

- The range of courses provides students with a wide range of academic and vocational options
- Good opportunities are provided for enriching the curriculum and for extra-curricular involvement
- Staffing and accommodation are good

Commentary

46. The school offers a wide and well-balanced range of thirty academic and vocational courses leading to GCSE, AS, A-level and GNVQ. Pupils have the opportunity to retake GCSE English and mathematics. The addition of philosophy and ethics relates well to the ethos of the school. Pupils follow an AS Level general studies course.

47. Good enrichment of the curriculum is provided through trips and visits. Students have access to the very good range of extracurricular provision available in the main school.

48. The school offers a broad and flexible range of options to its students. It is possible to take both GCE and GNVQ courses, and to study at AS and A level simultaneously. Although some group sizes are small, this flexibility results for the most part in viable courses. The school is aware that its range of Intermediate GNVQ provision could be wider, but gives students good advice on availability at local colleges, with which it does not seek to compete in this area.

49. Staffing is good. Teachers are well qualified, sufficient in number and well deployed. Support staff are used well and fulfil particularly important functions in ICT and design and technology.

50. Accommodation is good. A good study area is available specifically for students in Years 12 and 13, which is well equipped with ICT, and a large common room. This gives them a good standard of amenities to support their study. The library/resource room, which has a careers area and more ICT facilities is available so that students may use their study periods effectively.

51. Resources are good and include increasing opportunities for students to use ICT.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of its pupils. Provision for pupils' guidance and support is very good. Pupils are monitored and supported very well as they move through the school. The school provides opportunities to seek and act on pupils' and students' views about their work and the development of the school.

Main strengths

- Staff know pupils very well and provide effective support and guidance for their work and achievement
- The induction procedures for new pupils ensure a very smooth transition to the school
- Pupils receive effective support and guidance, especially when choosing courses and careers
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils and students to contribute to, and influence, change through the school council

Commentary

52. The school implements very good systems for the welfare of its pupils. Child protection procedures are up to date, well known to staff and effective. Staff ensure that pupils work in a healthy environment and good risk assessments are in place for pupils' security. A central register of yearly checks on equipment is not kept although at present individual departments take responsibility for this. Arrangements for first aid are good. Pupils are very well supervised outside lessons.

53. A very thoughtful and well-managed induction procedure makes transition from primary schools to Year 7 as smooth as possible. This is much appreciated by pupils and parents.

54. The pastoral system works very effectively. Staff know the pupils very well and pupils appreciate the individual support they receive. Pupils can turn to a wide variety of people for guidance and support. The counselling work of the lay chaplain is particularly appreciated by pupils and parents. Other sources of advice include tutors, heads of year, teaching assistants, support staff, the careers advice service and learning support systems. A very good mentoring programme, organised by the sixth form, further supports younger pupils. Pupils receive good careers advice as

they move through the school. Support for gifted and talented pupils has developed very well and those pupils with special educational needs are well supported because teachers, and teacher assistants, are aware of their needs.

55. Well-managed arrangements for assessment and for tracking progress through the newly introduced Aim High program work effectively. These form an effective base to monitor pupils' achievements. Good careers advice, with well-organised work experience in Year 10, helps pupils to make appropriate decisions. Pupils on the school council discuss matters which are of interest to all pupils and in most tutor groups other opportunities exist to voice opinions on a variety of topics. Overall, tutors are making good use of tutor group time. In the good examples seen, lively discussions took place and pupils had a voice. However, the effectiveness of the use of tutor group time is inconsistent. Pupils appreciate the very good overall level of support that the school provides. The school provides good individual guidance for pupils who have special educational needs, including those in the support unit. Good links have been established with local authority services and primary schools.

Sixth form

The support and guidance offered to students as they join, move through and leave the sixth form are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students feel very well supported and cared for and are positive about the help they receive
- Good information is made available to students and management has developed very good systems but these are not all well monitored to judge their effectiveness

Commentary

56. Students are very well looked after and supported. They particularly appreciate the procedures for inducting them to the sixth form and preparing them for their next stage of education. Tutors and staff with sixth form responsibility provide very good continuing support. Well-informed advice is available on careers, further or higher education, employment and job opportunities. Students are encouraged to do work experience and it is an expectation of most vocational courses. They have responsibilities to seek such employment with additional guidance from the effective Connexions service. They are involved in setting challenging personal targets. Good opportunities exist for students to express their views. The sixth form council provides a useful forum to discuss matters of concern. Students run this themselves and enjoy opportunities to lead discussions

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnership with parents is good. Links with the community, other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with local primary schools exist as part of the school's technology outreach work
- Links with local colleges enable the school to offer a wider range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11
- Parents are very supportive of the school
- Links with the local business community extend opportunities for students
- Notice of parents' consultation dates is too short for some parents

Commentary

57. The school has maintained its strong links with parents and the community and improved them with other schools and colleges.

58. The school provides parents with a satisfactory range of information about their children's attainment and progress. The annual reports give parents good information about the levels their

children are working at and where appropriate predicted grades. Information about the specific strengths and weaknesses in the students' learning in individual subjects is insufficient, and targets are sometimes vague. These reports are supplemented with an interim report and parents' meetings. These consultations are very well attended, in spite of some parents finding it difficult to arrange their other commitments because of the relatively short notice of about two weeks that is generally given. These meetings are not detailed in the newsletter at the start of the year or in the students' homework planners. The school provides both parents and pupils with comprehensive information about courses in Year 10 and for options for further and higher education to enable them to make informed choices.

59. The parents association raises substantial amounts of money for the school and contributed significantly to the sponsorship required for the technology college bid.

60. The school works very well with the local community in a number of ways. The local business community provides work experience placements and mock interviews for students. Local firms attend careers conventions open to all pupils from Year 9 upwards. The local Catholic community is very supportive of the school. Many attended an outdoor mass at the school celebrated by the Archbishop of Liverpool. As part of its role as a technology college, the school is providing adult education classes based on ICT. These are very popular and the school is looking to extend this provision, as well as introducing a Microsoft academy course from September.

61. Primary schools speak very highly of the support given them Christ the King. As a technology college, the school offers them valuable support in both the teaching of science and in the maintenance of ICT equipment. A science teacher works half a day a week in the partner primary schools for about 4 weeks. During this time he will teach a topic that he has previously agreed with the primary school. The close links with the local colleges are very well used to provide courses to meet students' needs that the school does not have the expertise to provide for, for example, hairdressing and motor vehicle maintenance. In addition there is very good collaboration between the colleges and the school to enable students to make appropriate choices about post-16 education.

Sixth form

Partnership with parents is good. Links with the community, other schools and higher education providers are very good.

Main strengths

- Links with local business community provide work placements for pupils on vocational courses
- Very good links with higher education providers supports students transfer to their next stage of education

Commentary

62. The school keeps parents well informed about students' progress through reports and consultation evenings. Parents are contacted at an early stage if there are concerns about a student's work.

63. Links with higher education institutions provide students with very good information about what their options are post-18 and about life at university. The initial residential course at a university is part of a very good induction programme for students joining the sixth form. Local schools provide good opportunities for students to undertake community service.

64. Local businesses are very supportive of vocational courses, providing work placements and, in some instances, resources for students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides good leadership and the success in achieving technology college status provides a good platform for school improvement. The leadership of other senior leaders is satisfactory as is the school's management. Governance is satisfactory and governors have successfully tackled most issues raised in the previous report.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the school strongly promote a Catholic ethos in the work of the school
- The school has made a good start to developing its work as a technology college
- Leadership and management are good in the sixth form
- Teaching has not improved sufficiently as a result of the monitoring process
- Recommendations from national strategies have not been used systematically to improve teaching
- The monitoring and evaluation of school policies and practice lack consistency

Commentary

65. The head exercises strong leadership. The school pays great attention to implementing its mission statement and aims, which does much to develop pupils' worthwhile values and positive attitudes and maintain the very good ethos of the school. All pupils are valued equally in the school's educational environment. Examination results have remained above average in Year 9 and were well above average at GCSE level in 2003. The school has made a good start to using the benefits of its new status as a technology college. An important part of the headteacher's plan for the school is to develop ICT as a means to raise achievement. The development of technology as a means of teaching is shared by staff and governors and is impacting on the learning of pupils. The use of ICT is being extended to assist and improve monitoring of pupils and school administration. The development plan is a comprehensive document with appropriate aims; it has clear outcomes and is fully costed. Most department development plans reflect the whole-school priorities to raise standards.

66. Overall management is satisfactory. Senior managers play an important part in maintaining the ethos of the school and have a thorough knowledge of all developments, stemming from a collegiate approach to management. Senior managers provide good role models for other staff and pupils and provide support and guidance, either when this is requested or through the 'drop in' process of lesson observations. Senior leaders are suitably experienced and knowledgeable about leadership and management processes. The school is tackling issues concerning teachers' workload through employing additional staff to undertake administrative and supervisory roles. There are clear lines of management for the senior leadership team and the headteacher meets regularly with each member of the team to discuss aspects of their role. Effective performance management systems are in place and meet requirements for teaching and non-teaching staff. A number of middle managers are benefiting from leadership training.

67. The procedure for lesson observations is in place but monitoring is not systematic and teaching has undergone too little development since the last inspection. The lessons from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy have not been thoroughly embedded across the curriculum amongst permanent staff, which has led to inconsistency of practice and effectiveness amongst teachers. As a result, teaching standards are satisfactory overall. Good examples of teaching and learning were observed, especially in modern foreign languages and geography, where teachers are benefiting from the sharing of good techniques and ideas. However, opportunities are not provided for the most effective teachers to share their teaching expertise as a matter of course among the staff. Literacy and numeracy are not systematically developed as part of whole-school initiatives. Senior staff collect much data about pupils' progress and attainment. Currently, this is not being used enough to stimulate developments in the effectiveness of teaching.

68. Leadership of subjects varies and is good overall. It is very good in geography and modern foreign languages and good in ICT, history, design technology, art, and physical education. Leadership is satisfactory in music and in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. It is unsatisfactory in citizenship which is not fully established as a subject. Management is satisfactory overall. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is very well organised.

69. The effectiveness of the governors is satisfactory. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and support it strongly. They are committed to the new status of the school. Governors have a well-organised committee structure with efficient procedures for reporting to the full governing body. There are good systems for monitoring the financial resources allocated to the school and governors have successfully dealt with most of the issues raised in the previous report. However, governors have not ensured that purposeful monitoring of teaching and learning takes place, leading to an overall rise in teaching standards and pupils' achievement. The governors have not yet fully implemented the statutory requirement to provide a distinct course in citizenship in Years 7 to 11.

70. Finances are carefully monitored. All spending is carefully considered and tracked. Spending is prioritised in line with the school development plan and the school follows 'best value' principles.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,464,960	Balance from previous year	74,666
Total expenditure	3,468,192	Balance carried forward to the next	73,962
Expenditure per pupil	2,592		

71. Arrangements for managing the provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. These pupils are identified in Year 7, following early testing in spelling and reading of the whole of the new intake. Primary schools pass on information to assist transition. Statements of special needs and individual education plans are reviewed regularly and are completed on time. The review process follows guidelines. Pupils are involved in evaluation and setting targets. The school makes every effort to involve parents in this process but a few parents would like more opportunities to communicate with staff on the progress of pupils. Targets are measurable, with dates by which they are to be achieved. Individual education plans provide enough guidance for teachers to know how they can help students to reach their targets. Pupils' achievement is carefully measured through the newly introduced Aim High program which targets achievement for all pupils.

72. The leadership and coordination of special educational needs across departments is satisfactory and has improved, but some management systems are not fully linked to improvement and monitoring is in need of development. For example, review feedbacks from subject departments do not concentrate on achievement and areas for improvement.

Sixth form

The head of sixth form provides good leadership and management. There is a shared commitment to improvement amongst those with posts of responsibility. Governors strongly support the development of the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of sixth form leads an effective team and the sixth form is managed well
- A very good induction programme from Year 11 to Year 12 helps students to settle in well
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are having a beneficial impact on its quality
- No procedures to compare attendance of students in different subjects

Commentary

73. The sixth form leadership is having a positive impact on the learning of students. The head of sixth form has high expectations and is committed to developing a sixth form flexible enough to provide for students with a wide range of aptitudes. Governors strongly support the further development of the sixth form. Management is efficient on a day-to-day basis.

74. A comprehensive range of courses is available for students wishing to continue with a Catholic education. Teaching and learning are monitored, evaluated and adapted to meet pupils' needs as part of the 14-19 post-16 strategy and this provides good continuity and progression from AS to A2 courses. The management of the curriculum is very good and the school works strenuously and successfully to provide as wide a range of course as possible to meet students' wishes, and to maintain viability of those courses that attract comparatively small numbers.

75. The head of sixth form regularly monitors the quality of lessons to ensure that schemes of work and programmes of study are meeting the needs of all pupils.

76. Sixth form finances are well managed to ensure that good value for money is provided despite the small size of some teaching groups.

PART C: SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some good teaching results in a good proportion of above average attainment in examinations
- Staffing problems have led to inconsistent practice and slow departmental development
- Most classroom teaching does not reflect the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy
- Leadership in English is beginning to impact on planning

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

77. Pupils enter the school with above-average attainment in national tests and results are above average in national tests at the end of Year 9. An above-average proportion of pupils obtain Levels 6 and 7. The boys do better than the national average for boys, but not as well as the girls, who have outperformed them by an increasing margin over the past three years. Results at the end of Year 9 were average in 2003 compared to those gained by similar schools. GCSE results were above average in 2003.

Standards and achievement

78. In Years 7 to 9, pupils answer questions articulately. They read and perform confidently and with expression. They write convincingly for different audiences and purposes. Pupils write well, using advanced vocabulary, good grammar, spelling and paragraphing. By Year 9, pupils write very imaginatively, creating tension and atmosphere. Presentation is generally good and generally improves over time. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils talk confidently in a variety of situations. Pupils are familiar with examination criteria and make good use of model answers. Pupils express spoken opinions sensitively, are perceptive when analysing what they read and are good listeners. They build up notes competently for structuring extended essays and redraft their work effectively. They read with insight. In lower sets, standards are inconsistent. A scrutiny of pupils' written work indicates that some pupils do not maintain previously good standards over time.

Teaching and learning

79. The teaching observed in Years 7 to 9 was mostly good. Lessons are structured so that time is purposefully used and lessons proceed at a good pace. Stimulating starter activities challenge the pupils to work quickly and efficiently. Effective plenary sessions ascertain what the pupils have learned, but use of these is inconsistent. A good range of writing styles is developed during Years 7 to 9, ranging from play scripts to letters and advertisements. In Year 8, good written work about bullying reveals perceptive understanding of a play text. Pupils are encouraged to widen their vocabulary. In Year 9 exercise books, there is challenging material like *Dulce et Decorum Est* and

good questions eliciting insightful answers on Macbeth. The quality of marking varies. Some closely follows the school's good marking policy, but much marking indicates that work has been seen, rather than corrected. There is no reference to National Curriculum levels and advice is not specific enough to help pupils raise their attainment from one level to another. Continuous assessment is not rigorous enough and pupils are unsure of how well they are doing in National Curriculum terms. No evidence was seen of pupils assessing their own work. The teaching and learning observed in Years 10 and 11 ranged from good to unsatisfactory. In the more effective lessons observed, pupils' learning was well structured and resources were used purposefully to raise standards. Overall, pupils read suitable texts and tasks are satisfactorily matched to their age and ability. An appropriate range of tasks encourages and enables students to cultivate different types of writing, resulting in some sophisticated critical and imaginative writing and understanding of writing styles. Pupils engage in group work but the effectiveness of this is inconsistent in lower sets because of variations in the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of class control. Some weak teaching was characterised by poor planning, a lack of pace and low expectations. Some work is marked in detail with constructive and helpful comments, but the quality of marking is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

80. The relatively new head of department is hard-working and committed, with a realistic understanding of what has to be done. English has suffered from many changes in staffing and some pupils have had several teachers within a short time. It has proved difficult to create a team spirit and to achieve a consistently good standard of teaching. The National Literacy Strategy has been inconsistently introduced across the department. Data is not used systematically to establish suitable expectations and targets for pupils. Carefully-targeted professional development, has made teachers aware of the latest initiatives, and time has been provided for achieving departmental improvements. The department receives good support from senior management, especially in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Plans for development are appropriate for improving results further and offsetting the problems caused by difficult staffing situations. Some good units of work, containing good opportunities for using ICT for research and presentation, have been introduced since the last inspection. Accommodation is satisfactory, although the size of some rooms limits opportunities for group work.

Language and literacy across the school

81. Pupils' competence in language is satisfactory. Generally, pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well. In geography, modern foreign languages and art, for instance, key words are displayed and pupils' work is corrected for grammar and spelling errors. In modern foreign languages the origins of words are discussed but the pupils' understanding of vocabulary is hampered by poor recognition of the similarity between English and some foreign words. In some subjects, not only are spellings not corrected, but badly-spelt work is given full marks. In science, there is little opportunity for pupils to write at length. The rate of development of literacy has varied between departments. A new co-ordinator has recently assumed responsibility for developing literacy and the school has a suitable policy.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because of the very good quality of teaching
- Standards and pupils' achievement are equally good in all three languages
- Very good leadership and management leads to very effective team work
- ICT is used very effectively to inject pace into lessons
- The accurate assessment and careful tracking of students' progress raise standards and achievement
- There is some inconsistency in the marking of students' work

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

82. All students take French in Year 7. In Year 8, most students then additionally study either German or Spanish until the end of Year 9. The offer of German and Spanish alternates each year. A small number of students studies only French in Years 8 and 9, to provide time to improve their English communication skills. Until last year, languages were compulsory in Years 10 and 11, but are now a very popular option. Some students study two languages at GCSE. About four fifths of all students studied a modern foreign language to GCSE in 2003, which is far greater than the national average. During the inspection, French was the main focus, but German and Spanish lessons and written work were also seen.

Examination results

83. Results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above those reported nationally. The results in GCSE in all three languages were above average, although a larger percentage takes the examination than is the case nationally. At the end of Year 9, girls gained better results than boys, but at GCSE level this position was reversed, which is contrary to the national picture.

Standards and achievement

84. By the end of Year 9, in French, German and Spanish, many students speak and write accurately on the topics in the scheme of work. Students' listening skills are particularly well developed. Most students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well, because of the very good and clear structure of lessons. By the end of Year 11, in all three languages, well over half of the students speak and write confidently and accurately on the GCSE topics, using present, past and future tenses and some complex sentences. They can state reasons for doing something and express their personal opinions.

Teaching and learning

85. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their very good linguistic skills develop students' skills well. In Years 7 to 11, in all languages, students respond very well to brisk, well-structured lessons with a variety of stimulating activities and resources. Lessons are conducted at a good pace. Teachers use mime and gesture effectively to clarify meaning. ICT is well used and makes a good impact on learning. Pupils learn effectively because the tasks match their needs and interests. Paired and group work encourage a good level of productivity. All students, but especially the gifted and talented, benefit particularly from lessons conducted entirely in French, German or Spanish. The marking of students' work is very thorough and helps them to progress by making standards and expectations very clear. Students understand the level of the work they are producing and know what they must do to reach higher levels. On occasions, however, work is not corrected in accordance with departmental guidelines, so pupils do not receive specific enough advice on how to improve. Students' learning is enhanced by the very good relationships between teachers and students.

Leadership and management

86. The head of department has a very clear vision and has developed a strong team of skilled teachers, who work very hard to implement the department's aims. The management makes a positive impact on achievement by the systematic tracking of students' attainment and progress. The attractive displays are also an aid to learning. The trips to France, Germany and Spain increase motivation and raise standards. Standards, teaching, leadership and management and resources are better than at the time of the last report.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for ICT is well planned and includes the imaginative use of new resources
- Teachers are developing teaching approaches in line with the Key Stage 3 Strategy, but these are not yet consistently applied
- GCSE results have not improved, overall, since the last inspection
- Many lessons are not stimulating enough to generate interest or discussion among pupils

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

87. Results of national tests at the end of Year 9, over the last three years, have been above average. Results were well below those for similar schools in 2003. In 2003, the percentage of students gaining A* to C grades at GCSE was around the national average, and has not improved since the last inspection. The percentage of students gaining A* or A grades was below the national average. However, these results are in line with expectation based upon these students' attainment in the Year 9 national tests.

Standards and achievement

88. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily in lessons. Although different abilities are broadly catered for by the setting arrangements, there is little use of extension work or support activities to improve the match of work to prior attainment, although the scheme of work indicates possibilities for this. The work set for most pupils challenges them appropriately, but that set for the lowest groups is sometimes too demanding and not sufficiently related to prior attainment, which limits their achievement.

Standards and achievement

89. In all years pupils show good algebraic and geometric knowledge and skills and recognise statistical terminology, but graphical work is not always of a good standard. Pupils are less skilled in using and applying what they have learned in investigative and practical situations. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in lessons. Different abilities are broadly catered for by the setting arrangements, but there is little use of extension work or support

activities, as suggested in the scheme of work, to improve the match of work to prior attainment. The work set for most pupils challenges them appropriately, but for the lowest groups this is sometimes too demanding and not sufficiently related to prior attainment, which limits their achievement.

Teaching and learning

90. Teaching was satisfactory overall and good in about half the lessons observed. Teachers are caring and concerned to do their best for the pupils and relationships are good. Increasing use is being made of ICT, with links to all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. In the best lessons, teachers present work well and use questioning effectively. The department has made a satisfactory start to implementing ideas from the National Numeracy Strategy, but some features are not yet fully embedded in the work of the department. Aspects requiring further development include sharing objectives with pupils at the beginning of the lesson, the range and pace of questioning in oral and mental starters, the effective use of plenary sessions, and the use of number equipment. Where teaching is less satisfactory, work is insufficiently matched to prior attainment, there is an unsatisfactory balance between teacher input and pupil work, or teachers do not intervene enough to respond to difficulties and keep pupils on task. Too few interesting activities are provided that enable pupils to solve problems and engage in discussion. Most pupils respond well, behave well and co-operate fully, but some pupils chatter and waste time in lessons, which limits their own learning and that of others who are easily distracted. Assessment of pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils' work is usually marked carefully, often with supportive comment, but, as at the last inspection, insufficient advice is provided about how to improve. Pupils' mastery of the National Curriculum is assessed through periodic tests and the results shared with the pupils. This provides pupils with a realistic picture of their progress. The school procedures for tracking progress and setting targets are used well.

Leadership and management

91. This is a large department and there has been regular monitoring of teaching and learning, and frequent meetings focused on development issues. Day-to-day organisation and management are satisfactory. There are sufficient qualified specialist teachers for the needs of the curriculum, but difficulties have been encountered in maintaining the continuity of learning during staff absence. The department documentation does not give enough guidance about approaches to raising standards, improving teaching and learning and planning, or whole-school issues such as literacy, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship.

Mathematics across the curriculum

92. The development of pupils' competence in numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Most pupils have a good recall of number facts and some are beginning to discuss strategies for mental calculation. Pupils have relevant experience in other subjects, such as measurement and perspective in art, and scaling and graphical work in geography and science, and they generally cope well with the mathematical demands of such work. The mathematics department is implementing ideas from the National Numeracy Strategy, although these approaches are not yet sufficiently embedded in the work of the department to have a major effect on standards of numeracy. The whole-school numeracy policy focuses on standardising mathematical work across departments. However, some departments are unaware of the policy, and most are not at present looking for opportunities to contribute to numeracy development.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is effectively developing the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning
- The good relationships between teachers and pupils helps sustain pupils' positive attitudes to learning
- Where pupils are supported by teaching assistants they make good progress
- There is little opportunity for active learning
- Too few opportunities are provided for independent investigative work
- Assessment does not tell pupils clearly enough what they need to do to improve their work

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

93. Results in national tests in Year 9 in 2003 were above average when compared to all schools and showed a slight increase on those achieved in 2002, but were well below those gained by pupils in similar schools. The percentage of students gaining A* to C grades at GCSE was significantly above the national average. However, only half of the pupils entered for the Intermediate GNVQ science course gain accreditation.

Standards and achievement

94. By the end of Year 9, pupils have acquired good subject knowledge and understanding but have less secure acquisition of the skills of scientific enquiry. The achievement of higher-attaining pupils is sometimes restricted by the lack of challenge in tasks set and insufficient opportunities to work independently. Pupils the GNVQ course in Years 10 and 11 are achieving above-average standards. They have good opportunities to work independently and their overall achievement is good. Pupils with special educational needs who are supported by a teaching assistant in class achieve well because of effective liaison between the class teacher and assistant both before and during lessons.

Teaching and learning

95. The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall and ranged from good to unsatisfactory. Teachers maintain good relationships with their pupils. As a result, pupils have a positive attitude towards science. They have confidence in their teachers and are happy to ask and answer questions in lessons, which enhances their learning. In a Year 9 lesson, a role-play activity was effectively used to prompt group discussions about how a contagious disease might be passed on. Generally, teachers concentrate too much on the transfer of subject knowledge and pupils have too few opportunities for independent, investigative learning. Questioning offers little opportunity for imaginative responses and for pupils to engage in debate about the science they are learning. Teachers are effectively developing the use of ICT in their teaching. For example, in a good Year 11 lesson, computers were used to calculate the momentum of a trolley on a linear air track from light

gate readings, pupils were very interested in the scientific concept being demonstrated and worked very productively. Pupils' work is regularly marked but marking rarely includes specific advice on what an individual pupil needs to do to improve. Pupils are aware of their performance targets and are tested regularly, but the information this generates is used to track progress rather than to help teachers modify their planning to take account of pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

96. The day-to-day management of the department is effective. School and departmental policies are followed consistently and the departmental plan, linked to the school development plan, has a clear focus on raising attainment. However, the key messages of the Key Stage 3 Strategy have not been sufficiently embedded in the practice of the department. Individual teachers are trying out interesting things but these are not being disseminated effectively. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are in place but these are not focused sharply enough on raising attainment. Accommodation and resources are good. Two laboratories have just been refurbished and data projectors and interactive whiteboards are common throughout the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well
- Resources are up-to-date and well used
- ICT initiatives are being well managed as part of the school's technology college status
- Pupils receive too little information on what they should do to improve their work

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Examination results

97. Results of teacher assessment in Year 9 were above average. Pupils completed vocational GNVQ courses in Year 11 in 2002 and 2003. In 2002, results were above average, and in 2003 they were well below average. This was linked to a change in examination board and external moderation of coursework which represents 60 per cent of the total assessment.

Standards and achievement

98. Current standards in Year 9 are above average. Pupils use a range of software confidently, including spreadsheets and desk-top publishing. They evaluate designs for promotional flyers and show intelligent curiosity in exploring a variety of software tools to develop their own ideas. In Years 10 and 11, pupils use ICT to explore real life situations, such as profit and loss for the annual Year 11 May Ball. They handle the advanced features of database and spreadsheet software very competently. Overall, their achievement is good.

Teaching and learning

99. The teachers have good subject knowledge, expect high standards of work and effectively challenge all pupils. Teachers make good use of presentation software and the interactive whiteboard. As a result, pupils are very clear about what they need to do in each lesson. Pupils use these resources themselves to demonstrate techniques and to share their work with others. The teachers know their subject well. In the best lessons observed, the pace is fast and a good variety of tasks captured the interest of pupils of all levels of attainment. The teachers have been working hard to raise the standard of the pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 and give additional support to those pupils who need it during lunchtimes or after school. Classroom assistants support the learning of lower-attaining pupils well to enable them to complete tasks. Additional help sheets are provided for pupils who need them. Higher-attaining pupils have the opportunity to develop their work through open-ended, challenging tasks, involving problem-solving. Teachers monitor standards achieved by pupils in lessons carefully and give good advice, but pupils receive too little information about what they must do to improve the standard of their written work. Most teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good or very good. The teachers know the pupils well and generally set very high standards of behaviour, which are reinforced in a firm but affable way. Good relationships between teachers and pupils enhance pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

100. An ICT management team is effectively developing ICT initiatives being undertaken as part of the school's technology college status. ICT is taught as a separate course for one hour a week. This meets the recommended requirements. The National Strategy for Years 7 to 9 has been introduced and is well managed by the ICT co-ordinator and supported by good resources. All pupils follow an ICT course in Years 10 and 11. A comprehensive review of the use of ICT across the curriculum has taken place to guide future planning. New courses are continually reviewed. Up-to-date equipment has been installed recently and the ratio of computers to pupils is above the national average. The very competent technical support team deals effectively with technical problems and monitor pupils' use of the Internet. The award of technology college status has prompted very good developments since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

101. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their ICT skills. The school has invested substantially in ICT equipment since achieving technology college status. The up-to-date equipment, including flat screen computer systems, data projectors and interactive whiteboards, is now being used in many subjects. At the time of the inspection, the facility for pupils to access the school's computer system from home or elsewhere via the school web site was about to be provided to develop the use of ICT throughout all areas of learning. The use of ICT in other subjects in Years 7 to 11 has been mapped and is developing well, but in some areas it is restricted by insufficient resources. The use of computers in modern foreign languages is particularly effective for presentation, research and the consolidation of work. Departmental display was enhanced by excellent examples of word-processed work. Teachers are making good use of interactive whiteboards to accelerate learning, for example in science, geography, art and mathematics. The use of ICT is limited in English, music and physical education.

102. The Successmaker program is having a beneficial impact on the learning of pupils with special educational needs. An informative careers program is available to pupils as part of their personal, social and health education programme.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths

- Results are consistently well above national average because the subject is very well led and has a strong commitment to very good teaching
- Imaginative teaching results in high challenge for pupils
- Students and staff share productive relationships and a very collaborative approach to learning

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Examination results

103. In 2003 results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average. The percentage of students gaining A* to C grades at GCSE was also well above the national average. In Year 9, girls achieve more highly than boys, but in Year 11 this is reversed. This trend in results has been sustained for the last 3 years.

Standards and achievement

104. Most students achieve very well in lessons because teachers have high expectations and use a wide range of methods. Year 7 pupils learn rapidly and take great care in their work so that they have a sound base on which to build future progress. Pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining students achieve as well as other students, because different tasks are set when appropriate and whole-class work is well designed to meet the needs of all pupils.

Teaching and learning

105. The quality of teaching was very good in most lessons observed. Teachers' subject knowledge, planning and imaginative use of resources ensured that pupils remained motivated and focused. Objectives are clear and learning is frequently checked against these so that pupils can see their progress. Learning takes place at a brisk pace which maintains pupils' interest. All pupils are encouraged to think for themselves in carefully-structured activities that give good scope for independent thought. In Years 9 and 10, pupils considered human and environmental problems in Kenya and Brazil. In both lessons pupils of all abilities participated fully and suggested solutions in a mature and sensitive way, which reflected well the values of the school. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and pupils receive constructive advice on how to improve.

Leadership and management

106. The department has a firm focus on improvement, based on a collaborative and self-critical approach. Development in the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning has been well managed. Geography contributes well to pupils' learning about citizenship, but pupils are not fully clear when they are studying this as opposed to geography, or about how well they are doing in it. The well-kept, purpose-built rooms, high quality display and interesting fieldwork opportunities help to produce a very good ethos and environment for learning.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good
- GCSE results are above the national average
- Relations between teachers and pupils are good and lead to effective learning
- The leadership of the department is good
- Work is not always matched to the needs of all pupils in a group

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

107. Results of Year 9 teacher assessments in 2003 were well above those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were above average.

Standards and achievement

108. Pupils join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are above the national average. At the end of Year 9, standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is good. Pupils develop a broad range of historical skills and are aware of the significance of primary and secondary sources. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on Rasputin, pupils examined pictures, texts and cartoons and made astute inferences from the evidence. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average and students continue to achieve well. Pupils show a good grasp of historical issues and good subject knowledge. Written work contains good examples of extended writing and in the perceptive interpretation of sources. Pupils demonstrate well-developed evaluation skills.

Teaching and learning

109. Teachers have high aspirations for their pupils. They provide challenging opportunities, and the effective teaching methods include stimulating paired and group activities. Rigorous questioning encourages pupils to develop their views intelligently and express them clearly. They present a case and justify it because teachers rightly encourage them to think that historical issues may be interpreted in more than one way. This was demonstrated very effectively by Year 11 pupils who were accounting for the popularity of Hitler with the German people in the election of 1932. The skilful use of resources led pupils to empathise with the attitude of different sections of German society and understand which of Hitler's policies would be popular. Positive relationships with pupils help to create a good climate for learning. Pupils are encouraged by the teacher's enthusiasm. They enjoy the subject and work productively. Lessons have clear aims at the start and a helpful review to consolidate learning at the end. In some lessons, however, the same tasks are set for all and some higher-attaining pupils are not fully stretched.

Leadership and management

110. Purposeful leadership has produced a proficient team of teachers, clearly focused on raising attainment. A current focus for the department is the development of accelerated learning skills, and these are evident in most lessons. In lessons where teaching and learning are good or better the requirements of the departmental teaching and learning policy are followed and the pace of learning is brisk. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory because in the last inspection arrangements for monitoring of certain aspects were underdeveloped. Good opportunities now exist for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Classroom displays are of high quality and produce a stimulating learning environment.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have improved over recent years and are now average
- Pupils' learning has benefited significantly from the use of ICT
- Opportunities for enrichment boost pupils' achievement
- Teaching and learning in electronics are poor because lessons lack sufficient challenge and pace

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

111. Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have risen over the last three years and are now average. In 2003, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades at GCSE was average. The percentages of pupils gaining A* to C grades in textiles and graphic products were above average, but well below average in electronics.

Standards and achievement

112. Pupils enter the school with varied, but overall average, skills, knowledge and understanding in designing and making. They make satisfactory progress with organisational skills in food technology, textiles and in their overall understanding of the principles and processes of designing. In graphic products, they successfully rise to the challenge of designing to meet clients' needs. By the end of Year 9, all pupils have learnt how to apply the design process to all strands of the subject, with the exception of electronics, where explanations are inadequate and many pupils do not understand how to proceed. Pupils make insufficient progress in electronics because of large gaps in their knowledge of basic theories. Pupils taking the GCSE courses enjoy their work. They are challenged by problems in all the different strands of the subject and they make satisfactory progress in arriving at appropriate solutions. Higher-attaining pupils respond positively to more difficult work, and design good products. Pupils think constructively about their work, evaluate what they are doing and decide how they can improve future work. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as others.

Teaching and learning

113. The effective use of ICT in teaching enables pupils to learn more quickly compared with traditional methods. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils who had not used a particular software program previously made good progress in understanding what can be achieved in drawing designs. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and use it well to plan and teach lessons. Objectives for basic skills teaching are firmly embedded in planning for teaching in Years 7 to 9. By age 14 all pupils have learnt to apply the design process to all strands of the subject. The exception is in electronics, where the teaching is aimed at a superficial level, explanations are inadequate and many pupils do not understand the direction of their learning. When this happened, pupils became restless and behaviour was unacceptable. Otherwise, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good. Standards of marking are variable, and teachers are not using assessment effectively enough to track pupils' progress and show them how to improve.

Leadership and management

114. As a result of good leadership, the measures implemented over the last four years to improve standards have had a positive effect. The departmental team spirit is strong and has led to good improvement since the last inspection. The handling of staffing difficulties over the last three years has been a major task, which has been managed well and curriculum needs have been met. The formal monitoring of teaching and learning is currently insufficient to eradicate the significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching. Technical support is effective in all areas, except food technology, and has a beneficial effect on pupils' achievement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths

- GCSE results have been above average over the last three years
- ICT is used skilfully in some lessons to raise pupils' achievement
- Teaching is stimulating and makes good use of resources
- Visits to galleries and elsewhere to view artwork provides a very good stimulus for pupils

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

115. End-of-Year 9 teacher assessments in 2003 were in line with those reported nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in GCSE examinations in 2003 was above the national average, as has been the case in recent years.

Standards and achievement

116. Standards in the current Year 9 represent good achievement for most pupils in relation to their standards when they joined the school. These standards are reached because pupils have positive attitudes and generally apply themselves purposefully. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate increasing knowledge and understanding of how to use the formal elements of art and design. Pupils are strongly motivated when they have the chance to work with computers. Current standards in Year 11 are above average. The work of higher and middle-attaining pupils is enhanced by their constructive and interested response to the important movements in art and the works of particular artists. Drawings are carefully annotated and pupils have a satisfactory grasp of technical language. Pupils achieve well over the two-year course, including those with special educational needs who benefit from carefully-targeted individual attention.

Teaching and learning

117. Teaching is good overall and very good on occasions. Teaching was particularly good in a Year 11 lesson in which pupils were learning from a huge variety of techniques that included intricate paintings on silk and glass, bold sculpting from breeze blocks, sensitive watercolour and chalk portraiture, and the skilful manipulation of digitised images. The use of ICT as a learning aid is developing well. When pupils have lessons on computers their learning is accelerated and standards rise. This was seen when Year 7 pupils used an ICT program for arranging a series of shapes into a complex composition. Results were skilful and imaginative. Higher-attaining pupils throughout the school have the opportunity to extend their learning through activities like photography and sculpture workshops. All pupils learn effectively from seeing original works of art and drawing in stimulating environments. A Year 10 class developed good ideas from evaluations of pictures seen in the Walker Art Gallery and in Liverpool Roman Catholic Cathedral. Teachers give pupils good advice on how to improve, but assessments of pupils' work are not always closely related to national standards.

Leadership and management

118. Improvement since the last inspection is good because all the strengths have been maintained and GCSE results have improved. Schemes of work are good. A satisfactory balance has been struck between the use made of working in clay and using two-dimensional media and materials. The head of subject acts as a very good role model by his engagement, both in school and nationally, with the development of the use of ICT for teaching and learning in art. The formal monitoring of teaching and learning is currently insufficient. Display, both in the department and around the school, raises the profile of the department and sets good standards to which pupils aspire.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well because of good teaching
- The achievement of some pupils in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory because of a lack of continuity of teaching
- The department is well organised
- ICT resources are limited and insufficient use is made of them in Years 7 to 9 to extend pupils' learning

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

119. Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average. GCSE results in 120. the 2003 were above average, both for A* to C grades and for A* and A grades.

Standards and achievement

120. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and this represents satisfactory achievement because standards on entry to the school were also above average. Pupils in Year 7 show good understanding of basic musical concepts and notation. By the end of Year 9, they create structured pieces drawing on their understanding of chords, scales, and a range of musical devices. Most pupils play the keyboard using the correct technique. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average and this represents good achievement because pupils of a range of abilities choose the course. Pupils compose skilfully, and the highest-attaining demonstrate imagination in their work. Pupils prepare their performances thoroughly, and show a good understanding of the musical styles which they have studied. The number of pupils choosing music in Years 10 and 11 has declined in the last two years, and the uptake amongst boys is very low.

Teaching and learning

121. Lessons are thoroughly planned and contain a variety of musical activities. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is methodical and tasks are accessible to all pupils. Most tasks interest and engross pupils, but some listening activities are mundane, such as asking pupils to name well-known TV themes. In discussion, pupils are not challenged to think in depth about the impact of the music they hear. On some occasions, talented pupils are not extended sufficiently. In the small Year 10 and 11 groups, pupils are given good individual support, and have access to computers both in and between lessons to aid their composing. Very good knowledge of both the subject and the requirements of the course underpins the planning of lessons. As a result, pupils are thoroughly prepared for the examination and achieve well. They are given helpful and encouraging feedback on their performing. Good use is made of homework in all years to reinforce and extend learning. The progress of pupils is tracked thoroughly, and they are encouraged to evaluate their work. Pupils' awareness of what they need to do to improve is not sharp enough.

Leadership and management

122. The departmental development plan identifies appropriate priorities, although some of these have not yet been fully introduced. Music has not received any significant benefit from the school's technology college status in Years 7 to 9, and the small number of computers in the department is not being used to extend pupils' learning at that level. Over half of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 have had several teachers since September. This has disrupted the continuity of their learning and consequently, attitudes to the subject have deteriorated and standards have fallen.

123. The day-to-day organisation of the department is good and there are well-documented schemes of work. Temporary teachers are given good guidance. The good instrumental teaching provision is well-supported by the department, and numbers taking tuition are average. A 'rock

school' initiative has widened opportunities for pupils to make music. Music makes a good contribution to the spiritual life of the school. The school choir achieves high standards although the number of pupils involved is small. Two school bands provide good additional opportunities for development for those taking instrumental tuition.

124. The department has made satisfactory improvements since the time of the last inspection. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have risen, and ICT is being used very effectively in those years. The number of pupils taking instrumental tuition has risen although the number of pupils pursuing music as an option in Years 10 and 11 has fallen.

Drama

125. In Year 7, drama is taught as a separate subject but is part of English in Years 8 and 9 and provision is considerably reduced in those years. Pupils learn basic dramatic terms and techniques like 'freeze frame'. They read and perform confidently in short plays where they are encouraged to learn lines and think about stage organisation, properties and costumes. They keep well-presented exercise books in which they make notes of the history of drama; write scripts and design masks. These books help to raise standards within the subject. Units of drama are gradually being incorporated into the Year 8 and 9 lessons in English to improve continuity in the subject. In the lesson observed, standards were above expectations for the course.

126. Drama is studied as an option in Years 10 and 11 and the GCSE pass rate is well above average. Performances are put on every two years and the pupils regularly perform in junior schools. Regular visits are made to professional and other performances in the area. Members of the school take part regularly in theatre workshops. These have included events organised by the Royal Shakespeare Company. The subject provides good opportunities for teaching citizenship and for personal and social development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new department leadership team is contributing well to improving standards
- Extra-curricular provision is good and this is helping pupils improve basic skills
- Monitoring and evaluating lessons are not impacting sufficiently on the quality of teaching and learning
- Moderating of assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 and marking in Years 10 and 11 are not yet effective enough

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

127. In 2003 results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above national expectation. Inspection evidence indicates that these assessments were an overestimate and that standards in Year 9 are average. At GCSE, the average point score was above the national average, even though

the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades in GCSE was significantly below average, and no pupils gained grades A* or A.

Standards and achievement

128. Students are generally at an average level on entry. By the end of Year 9, standards are average. In basketball, pupils understand the principles of the jump and set shot, and evaluate each other's technique to improve performance. In racquet sports, girls' standards are below expectation. In a Year 11 dance lessons, pupils planned and choreographed a routine using eight beats. In Year 11, GCSE pupils worked cooperatively on an issue concerning media and sport, and through challenging interventions by the teacher, gained a good understanding of the relationship between media, sport and sponsorship. Standards are in line with national expectation in all aspects of the course.

Teaching and learning

129. The quality of teaching was good in one quarter of lessons observed and satisfactory in the others. In the better lessons, teachers plan appropriate, challenging tasks which focus on skills development. Pupils in all years have good attitudes to learning. They come prepared for lessons and are well behaved. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to maintain pupils' motivation. Overall, the teaching of basic skills is insufficiently developed to raise pupils' standards and achievement above a satisfactory level. In GCSE classes, teachers use a good variety of resources, interesting such as word puzzles and OHP presentations, to give added interest to lessons. ICT is used in the classroom, which benefits pupils' achievement. Teachers make good use of plenary sessions to assess and consolidate learning. Praise and encouragement are good features of teaching styles. When marking pupils' work, however, teachers give too little specific information about how pupils may improve their standards. Teaching makes a good contribution to the spiritual ethos of the school through emphasis on the involvement of all and the development of the individual. Lessons are planned so that pupils of all abilities can succeed. For example, pupils use short-handled sticks in hockey and short racquets in badminton and lesson planning caters for different levels.

Leadership and management

130. The new leadership team provides a good impetus for future development through good planning and raising expectations amongst pupils. Appropriate measures have been taken to improve GCSE performance. Additional classes and mentoring of pupils are contributing to raising expectations. All staff are appropriately qualified and have clearly defined responsibilities. Performance management and monitoring are integral features of the department. Departmental documentation is good. The curriculum encompasses an appropriate range of activities. The extensive extra-curricular programme provides pupils with very good opportunities to improve their skills and progress at different levels of sport. This additional provision has resulted in pupils competing at borough, county and national levels. Orienteering has been introduced in Years 7 to 9 so that the curriculum now meets statutory requirements. Indoor accommodation is now of a good standard. Currently, Year 9 pupils have only one hour of physical education each week, which is below the recommended level, which limits the standards attained.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's rich tradition of community service and its caring ethos offer excellent potential for National Curriculum citizenship
- The subject's leadership is hard-working and dedicated to its full, successful implementation
- Planning is inadequate and the full National Curriculum is not covered
- Pupils' work in citizenship is not properly assessed and their progress measured.

- Standards are below those expected and achievement is unsatisfactory because pupils do not learn the full subject
- Management is unsatisfactory because standards achieved, teaching learning and the curriculum are not monitored

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Examination results

131. Citizenship is not an examination subject.

Standards and achievement

132. Citizenship is taught in some discrete lessons, through personal, social and health education, and through other subjects. Good work has been done to establish which subjects cover the programmes of study and subject departments refer to citizenship in their schemes of work. Currently, work is not assessed specifically for citizenship, but a good system for this will shortly be introduced.

133. Coverage, through other subjects, of knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens and developing skills of communication and enquiry, is too patchy and incomplete because teaching is not explicit enough. Teaching relies too heavily on lessons which make incidental contributions to citizenship, in which pupils are often not aware that they are studying a distinct subject. Consequently, standards are below those expected and achievement is unsatisfactory by Years 9 and 11.

134. There is no planned programme which ensures that all pupils have opportunities to develop their skills of responsible action within school and the wider community. However, the co-ordinator is devising one, drawing on the existing school activities and initiatives. These include an effective and developing school council, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and substantial work for a wide range of charities.

Teaching and learning

135. None of the discrete lessons for citizenship could be observed during the inspection, but some well-taught, albeit implicit, citizenship-related topics were seen in humanities, and a lively session of the school council was observed in which year representatives discussed issues articulately and maturely. Recent successes have included the acquisition of three water fountains and improved toilet facilities. These achievements, and pupils' own democratic election, convince them that their voices are heard, and they appreciate the work of the citizenship co-ordinator, who organises meetings. Awareness is being raised through a busy calendar of pupil visits, for example, to meet the local MP at Westminster, and outside speakers, for example, an asylum seeker, who talked to whole year groups.

Leadership and management

136. Management is currently unsatisfactory because there is no monitoring of what is taught, the programmes of study are not yet covered, and there is no scheme of assessment in place for citizenship. However, the school managed to resolve a key staffing problem at the beginning of the academic year which had been hampering implementation, and immense effort has been invested in getting citizenship up and running. Consequently, it is now well on the way.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight 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 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	99	40	50	76	88
Biology	5	100	96	20	39	68	77
Chemistry	2	100	98	0	49	80	85
Communication Studies	8	100	99	25	38	75	82
English Language	8	100	99	0	36	63	81
English Literature	7	100	99	14	47	74	87
Design and Technology	3	100	98	0	35	53	78
General Studies	24	100	95	21	31	71	73
Geography	8	100	99	50	45	98	84
German	5	100	98	40	48	88	85
History	10	100	99	40	45	86	85
Mathematics	2	50	97	0	56	20	89
Music	1	100	99	0	39	80	81
Other Social Studies	32	97	97	34	43	76	82
Physics	1	100	97	0	45	80	82
Religious Studies	9	89	99	44	47	76	86
Business	11	91	89	0	21	57	60
Health and Social Care	9	56	93	0	22	40	64
Information Technology	24	71	89	25	28	45	65

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Part 1 GNVQ	1	100	-	0	-	0	-
Business Full GNVQ	16	75	-	17	-	0	-
Leisure and Tourism Part 1 GNVQ	12	92	-	17	-	0	-

Leisure and Tourism Full GNVQ	7	86	-	15	-	0	-
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ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Focus subjects in this area were English language, English literature and French. Lessons were sampled in German and Spanish.

German

137. One Year 12 class was sampled. The teaching, learning and achievement were excellent and students demonstrated well-above-average speaking and listening skills. The teacher prepared the lesson very thoroughly and had very high expectations. The students coped very well in a lesson conducted entirely in German by a native speaker, and spoke accurately and fluently in role-play situations they would be likely to encounter on their vocational placements in a German kindergarten. The students were highly motivated and responded fully to the challenge and very high expectations of the teacher.

Spanish

138. One Year 13 class was seen. The teaching was good and the teacher had very good subject knowledge and excellent linguistic skills. Very good use was made of up-to-date, authentic material from the Internet to motivate students. The learning and achievement of students were satisfactory. At times students did not participate well orally and had difficulties understanding a text, because of their limited literacy in English.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students use computers effectively for independent research
- Students express their views perceptively
- Standards of spelling and presentation are good
- The course lacks pace for some higher-attaining students

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

139. Results in English language in 2003 were well below average. In English literature, they were below average.

Standards and achievement

140. In the English language lessons observed, standards were average. Students expressed perceptive opinions about language, showing a good understanding of the distinctions between formal and informal language, and the need to be aware of the purpose of language and the varied audiences for whom it is intended. They discussed purposefully in pairs, carefully annotated scripts with analyses and made concise notes in preparation for essays. They communicated their findings

lucidly to the whole group. In English literature, students contributed reflective opinions and made perceptive comparisons between two challenging texts. Other students carried out proficient independent research on computers. These students were working at an above-average standard for their stage in the course. Language coursework indicated that students were working in line with course expectations. They write imaginatively, redraft effectively and model their writing convincingly on a style of their choice. In general, however, their writing lacked sophistication. Independent studies of language were rather basic and lacked in-depth knowledge of linguistic techniques. In literature course work, students demonstrated good skills of writing critically. Standards of spelling and vocabulary are good and students structure their work well.

Teaching and learning

141. Teachers' relationships with students are friendly and support students' learning well. Overall, the teaching of literature is more effective than teaching of language. Course work in English literature indicates that it is well matched to individual students needs. Marking and assessment are constructive and detailed. ICT is used well both to extend learning and to present work. In English language, students learn to develop their knowledge of linguistic terms and their skills in analysing writing. They are taught how to undertake research independently. However, too much emphasis is put on consolidating learning and the course consequently lacks pace and a certain amount of challenge especially for higher-attaining students. Lively discussions take place. These are more effective in the larger groups. Learning is sometimes impaired by the small numbers so that it is difficult to use creative teaching methods or to get discussion going. Students in both courses are aware of the examination requirements and assessment helpfully refers to examination objectives.

Leadership and management

142. Day-to-day organisation is good. Leadership is satisfactory and copes well with the constraints of such fluctuating and occasionally small numbers of students. Schemes of work are carefully organised. Teachers are well-matched to the curriculum.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

143. The development of language and literacy across the sixth form is satisfactory. Teachers give a good lead in the use of technical language. Students generally show a good grasp of subject-specific vocabulary in their speaking and writing. Discussions of a high level were observed in English literature and history. The sampled law lesson showed students making good progress in understanding fine distinctions between different legal definitions connected with manslaughter. The small size of many groups works for and against the development of literacy through discussion. Sometimes, students speak freely and confidently, while at other times they are reluctant to venture opinions. Extended discussions were not a common feature of lessons observed. Staff have undergone recent training in developing literacy and a new coordinator is currently raising staff awareness of suitable lines of development.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good, innovative teaching leads to well above average language skills
- The very effective use of ICT raises students' standards
- The teachers' very good linguistic competence and subject knowledge help students to achieve their full potential
- Only small numbers opt for the course

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Examination results

144. The results for the small number of students at A-level in 2003 were well above average.

Standards and achievement

145. Progression in terms of skill development and vocabulary acquisition, from entry to the sixth form to completion of the course, is very good. Students understand lessons conducted entirely in French with ease and express themselves confidently on a wide range of A-level topics. Students have a good awareness of grammatical structures and the quality of their coursework is very high.

Teaching and learning

146. Lessons are very well planned and lesson objectives are clearly communicated to students. Teaching is imaginative and very creative and effective use is made of ICT to motivate students and enhance their learning. Students listen intently to recorded texts to pick out details and speak with obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment. Very good relationships create a very positive environment for learning in which errors are skilfully corrected, enabling students to improve their performance very effectively.

Leadership and management

147. The teaching of French is very well organised and there is a clear vision for the development of the subject. Teachers work very well together to plan and teach their lessons. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and high standards have been maintained. Good efforts are underway to increase the number of students taking A-level.

MATHEMATICS

Post 16 students can follow courses in A-level mathematics, GCSE re-sit mathematics and key skills numeracy. Although the school offers further mathematics at AS level there has been no take-up recently.

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Year 13, students' attitudes are very positive, and their relationships with staff are very productive
- Some students underachieved in A-level mathematics in 2002 and 2003
- Good practice is not shared enough across the department
- Computers are insufficiently used

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

148. As a result of the small numbers taking A-level mathematics, the nature of the groups varies considerably from year to year. Results in 2000 and 2001 were well above average. Results in 2002 and 2003 were well below average, reflecting the nature of the cohorts in those years.

Standards and achievement

149. The standards of work seen in class and in exercise books and folders of the current Year 12 are below average. The standards of the few students in Year 13 are average. Although there were too few A-level mathematics candidates in 2002 and 2003 for reliable statistical comparison, it is clear that a small number of students underachieved in their A-level examinations. The achievement of the current cohort of students studying the subject is satisfactory, given the standards on entry to the course.

Teaching and learning

150. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Year 13. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject. The best lessons involve students in lively discussion, and they proceed at a good pace. Students are well challenged and build effectively on their prior knowledge and understanding. As a result, students develop constructive relationships with teachers, show high levels of interest and involvement. However, learning over time is often adversely affected by technical weaknesses in algebra, such as the solving of simultaneous equations derived from questions in mechanics. Students are strongly appreciative of the teaching that they get and value the readiness of staff to help them outside the classroom. Many more students start the A-level mathematics course than finish it. In 2002, of the 14 students who began the course in September, only six were left by the following June. Currently, four students are following the course in Year 13. The teaching of GCSE re-sit groups is sound, but the teaching of key skills numeracy neither stimulates students nor attracts them, and it is unsatisfactory.

Leadership and management

151. Documentation is satisfactory. Half-termly assessments make target grades clear to students and these are reported to parents. Not enough is done formally to spread good teaching practice amongst the staff. Currently this takes place only by informal discussion. ICT is insufficiently used and most A-level lessons are taught in rooms that lack interactive whiteboards, which limits the scope of some activities.

Mathematics across the curriculum

152. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory across the curriculum. Students engage in mathematical calculation confidently where it is required, for example in science. In physics, methodical calculation enabled students to advance their understanding of the characteristics of vectors. In a Year 12 geography lesson, mathematics was applied competently to advance students' understanding to aid the analysis of data collected on a fieldwork exercise on the erosion of Sefton sand dunes.

SCIENCE

The focus subject in this area was biology. Lessons were sampled in chemistry and physics.

Chemistry

153. One Year 12 practical lesson was observed in which students worked enthusiastically on experiments, supported by the teacher. Higher-attaining students lucidly explained the purpose and chemistry involved in titration. The achievement of students of all levels of ability was satisfactory and all made progress in their understanding of the processes involved. Overall, teaching and learning were satisfactory.

Physics

154. One lesson was seen in Year 12 in which students were following the New Advancing Physics course. Teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory and standards were average. The teacher supported students well in relation to trigonometric skills for the resolution of vectors.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge stimulates students' learning well
- Students achieve well in relation to their previous attainment
- Teaching and learning styles are too restricted but are being broadened
- The quality of marking is variable in the depth of comments made by teachers

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

155. Results in 2003 were below average, but value-added data provided by the school indicate students made progress.

Standards and achievement

156. Standards in the current Year 13 are above average, for example in terms of students' understanding of the structure and function of the liver, the biochemistry of reactions that occur there, and the changes involved in genetic mutations.

Teaching and learning

157. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Concepts are developed well through a combination of clear explanation, questioning to probe students' understanding, written activities, data interpretation, use of past questions, practical activities, modelling and use of ICT for simulations and research. Students respond well to the learning opportunities. They make good progress and

achieve well. Opportunities for group work, independent work, problem-solving and student presentations have been too limited. A new A-level course has been introduced in Year 12 and a broader range of learning opportunities is associated with this, including fieldwork and extended practical work. The work is context-based and students are responding well to this. Students' attitudes are positive throughout the subject. Resources are appropriate and well used. In a good Year 12 lesson, the teacher used an interesting video clip about coral, together with an information sheet about coral bleaching and questioning, to develop students' understanding. Relevant homework required students to research the topic further, independently, and produce a report. Suitable extension work was provided for the higher-attaining students. Regular marking of work is based on examination requirements, but there is variation in the depth of comments made giving students guidance on how to improve.

Leadership and management

158. Teaching is carefully monitored and constructive feedback is given to teachers to assist the development of the subject. A new course has recently been adopted to broaden the range of teaching and learning styles which are limited at present. More detailed schemes of work have been introduced, which are helping to promote consistently high expectations.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some students use ICT effectively for planning and presenting written work
- A stimulating range of resources enables students to develop their ideas imaginatively
- Students of all abilities are well supported
- Assessment of written work is an area for further development

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

159. Results in 2002 and 2003 were well below average.

Standards and achievement

160. Current standards of work are average. The written work of some higher-attaining students is well planned and imaginatively presented using sophisticated ICT processes. Students show confidence in using advanced features, for example of spreadsheets. Some of the more complex features of the software are insufficiently used. In one practical class, however, the Flash program was used effectively to create effects for a web page. This demonstrated a good response to a challenging task for students, enabling them to achieve particularly well. In the theory lessons observed most students produced complex diagrams to show information flow. In a double award class, students demonstrated a sound understanding of entity relationship diagrams, redundancy of data and normalisation in a database.

Teaching and learning

161. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and know what is required from the AVCE course. Classroom management is good and the teachers maintain a positive learning environment. The attitude of some students is rather passive and the teachers have to work hard, using a variety of teaching styles, to involve students in class discussions. This worked well where small-group teaching took place. Good resources are provided. Students use these well for presenting their work to others in the group. The equipment enables them to develop their ICT capability very well. Students of all abilities are suitably challenged and supported. Teacher gives continual support to all students during lessons, providing good support for individual needs and extending students' knowledge and confidence.

162. In theory lessons, students are given written guidelines about the requirements for achieving different grades in the theory examinations, for which exemplar material provided. Students are provided with self assessment sheets for their written work, but this is only partially completed with no assessor comments. As a result, students do not know their current level and precisely what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

163. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The department and resources are well organised. The department is innovative in its use of new equipment and programs. Teachers work well together to share the teaching of the post-16 courses. The lack of thorough assessment is an area for further development.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

164. ICT skills develop well across the curriculum and students show a good level of competence. Good use was made of an interactive whiteboard in history for organising speakers' notes when they made presentations to the class. The notes were then collated to provide an orderly learning resource for the group. Data logging is used in biology for photosynthesis and germination measurements and in physics for light gates. Up-to-date software is used in biology to demonstrate animations and to present revision questions. In modern foreign languages, ICT is used for brainstorming and research for projects. These included the Madrid bombings, which took place the week before the inspection, using Spanish newspapers on line. ICT is used effectively in business studies, and all work is word-processed to a high standard. In leisure and tourism, ICT is fully integrated. Students have good ICT skills and use desk top publishing, spreadsheets, graphics, presentation software and digitised images. All course work is computer-generated and the quality of this work is very good. No use of ICT was seen during the inspection in mathematics or English.

HUMANITIES

History was the focus subject in this area. In addition, lessons were sampled in geography, law and psychology.

Geography

165. In the one lesson seen in Year 12, students covered a wide range of challenging, practical and theoretical aspects of physical geography, including use of mathematical analysis, and achieved a high level of understanding. The teacher's excellent knowledge and preparation and the brisk pace of the lesson ensured excellent learning. This reflects the excellent results over the last two years.

Psychology

166. In the lesson sampled in Year 12, teaching, learning and achievement were good as a result of a good balance of theoretical work and active experimentation. The well-motivated students were studying stress management, which included the enthusiastic testing of progressive muscle relaxation techniques. Standards were in line with course expectations.

Law

167. Standards were in line with course expectations in a sampled Year 13 lesson. Students developed a clear understanding of the distinction between voluntary and involuntary manslaughter, and classified case histories accurately. Teaching was good. The teacher had good subject knowledge and his clear explanations enabled students to learn effectively.

History

Provision for history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge and teach well-planned, interesting and challenging lessons
- Students achieve very well for their in comparison with their prior attainment
- Students have positive attitudes and show confidence in their teachers because relationships are very good
- Assessment, target-setting, and evaluation are areas for further development

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

168. Results have fluctuated in recent years and have usually been above, or well above average. In 2003, results were above average. Value added data shows that most students substantially exceeded predictions. In the last two years boys, did better than boys nationally and they broadly matched the performance of girls in the school.

Standards and achievement

169. The overall standard of students starting A-level history is average. They sustain very good progress throughout the course. Standards in the lessons and work seen were above average. In Year 12, the teachers exploited the lively group dynamic and stimulated discussion. Students show a good level of independent thinking and are confident when offering or justifying their opinions. In Year 13, students feel well supported by staff and know how to achieve their best, but they are less overtly self-confident.

Teaching and learning

170. Teachers use up-to-date methods with enthusiasm and humour, so students have positive attitudes and a lively and enquiring approach to history. Two Year 12 lessons presented opposite interpretations of the Reformation in a dramatic and memorable way, so that students were engrossed in the work and understood a wide range of ideas very well. Teachers use students' high motivation to good effect, particularly their readiness to work together and share ideas and notes. A strong feature of work in Years 12 and 13 is that students are required to think at a high level and to justify their opinions fully by reference to sources. This they do very well. Resources, including ICT, are used very well to add pace, challenge and interest to lessons.

Leadership and management

171. The department has a strong team spirit and a focus on improvement. Teachers plan together well to develop the subject and ensure high standards, and they closely monitor students' progress. They are constructively self-critical, although evaluation of the impact of teaching could be more effectively done and better used to sustain or change practice. Assessment is rigorously used, but, along with target-setting and evaluation is an area for further development. The development of ICT has been well managed. The wider use of computers is planned as resources become available. The few issues raised in the last inspection have been resolved and standards have improved.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

There was no focus subject in this area. However, design and technology was sampled.

Design and technology

172. One Year 12 lesson was sampled. Teaching, learning and achievement were good and standards were above average. The students were well motivated and learned well from a tutorial style of teaching that enabled them to focus on innovative projects, such as investigating the weight of distribution of the head of a golf club. Relationships between the teacher and students were and students well supported in their work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

There was no focus subject in this area. However, lessons were sampled in art and design, music, drama and media studies.

Art and design

173. Standards on entry to the A-level art class are below average overall and standards continue to be below the national expectation, but appear to be set to rise. Students' attitudes are very good, which is evidenced by their mature approach to a tutorial system of teaching. Teaching supports students' learning effectively and relationships between the teacher and students are very good.

Music

174. Music attracts only small numbers of students and consequently Year 12 and 13 students are taught together. One lesson was observed in which teaching and learning were good, because of good planning and focused individual support. Students made good use of ICT to aid their composition work. The standard of students' work was average and they achieved well.

Drama

175. One lesson in year 13 was sampled. Prompted by the teacher, students made informed decisions about directing their own play. Standards were above expectation for the course.

Media studies

176. An effective lesson in media studies was seen, in which year 12 students gave good short talks and demonstrated a variety of visual and sound techniques used in the production of documentaries. Students achieved well and reached the expected standards through the steady acquisition of knowledge and technical expertise.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus subject in this area was leisure and tourism. One lesson in physical education was sampled.

Physical education

177. In a good lesson observed in Year 12, the small number of AS students enthusiastically and successfully coached a group of Year 11 boys in football techniques. Warm-up activities were effective and led to consolidation of knowledge about muscle groups. The teaching, learning and achievement were good and standards were in line with national expectations.

Leisure and tourism

Provision for leisure and tourism is **very good**.

Main strengths

- Very good teaching assists the students' very good acquisition of knowledge and skills
- Very constructive assessment enables students to improve their work and raise standards
- Students' very positive attitudes and their very good rapport with teachers help them to make very good progress
- Students use ICT effectively to enhance their learning

Commentary

	Year 12
Standards	Average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Examination results

178. 2003 results for Intermediate GNVQ, the first for this new course, were above average and students gained predominantly merits and passes.

Standards and achievement

179. The current Year 12 students' standards are average, representing very good achievement for them in comparison with their attainment on entry to the sixth form. They use ICT and number skills confidently and presented original research well, for example in investigating a company's customer care service and its marketing methods. Relative weaknesses are the lower-attaining students' less good analytical and language skills.

Teaching and learning

180. The students' steady gains in knowledge and skills are the result of teaching that is energetic, imaginative, and meticulously prepared to meet the needs of students at all ability levels. Teachers plan lessons stimulating introductions to topics. Students' strengths are their steady acquisition of knowledge and its careful application to the leisure and tourism industries. The subject makes effective use of ICT, and some expertly produced advertising documents were seen. Students apply themselves enthusiastically and productively for the whole lesson. They work together well, sharing ideas and solving problems. Through word-processing and Internet research, they improve their already good presentation and fast-developing independent learning skills. Teachers enliven their teaching with up-to-date illustrations, which interest and motivate students. The students' good recall of previous topics is constantly reinforced and tested by well-targeted questioning. Good use of praise rewards and encourages students. Very constructive and detailed oral and written comments on work help

students to improve, and progress seen in coursework over the year is striking. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject and work hard, meeting the teachers' high expectations of them. Attendance is very good and almost all students who choose the course go on to complete it.

Leadership and management

181. Rigorous monitoring is a characteristic of the department. Assessment is used very effectively to set targets and closely track students' progress, and the students themselves have a very clear understanding of their own learning. There is a busy calendar of visits and speakers, and work experience in Year 10 provided the present Year 12 students with valuable placements in hotels and sports centres.

BUSINESS

Provision in business is **good**.

Main strengths

- ICT facilities for students are very good
- Relations between teachers and students are very good, which benefits students' learning
- Very good assessment and tracking of student assignments ensures that all students do well in small groups of wide ability

Commentary

	Year 12
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

182. Results in Year 13 were below the national average but in line with the department's expectations for these students from their previous attainment.

Standards and achievement

183. The majority of the students enter the courses with below-average GCSE results and achieve well from their starting point. The wide range of ability within the groups is reflected in students' standards of work. Groups for the single and double AVCE course are combined for parts of the course. This benefits activities such as discussion. Students have a good knowledge of the central concepts of the subject. They demonstrate a clear understanding of marketing and the impact of advertisements.

Teaching and learning

184. Teaching and learning are good overall because teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and have high aspirations for their students. Relations between teachers and students are very good, leading to good learning. Teachers' explanations are clear and discussions are well informed. Lessons are carefully planned to use methods that fully involve students and expect them to take responsibility for their own learning. A good balance of explanation, research and opportunities for students to work in pairs and groups is provided. Students respond well to the support they receive. Students work well in teams and this benefits their learning. Student's work is

thoroughly assessed and they receive clear guidance on how to improve to meet the criteria for the higher grades. Students' progress in relation to their targets is monitored effectively through a detailed tracking system. Students are expected to use ICT for the course and very good resources are available for this throughout the day. Their very good use of ICT has a positive impact on the quality of their research and written assignments.

Leadership and management

185. The subject is well organised and the head of department has established a challenging ethos, with a strong focus on raising standards. The teachers have high expectations of their students. A very good process enables standards to be closely monitored and evaluated. Students complete an evaluation of the course and their views are taken into account, for example in the careful planning to ensure that deadlines for coursework do not coincide.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

There was no focus subject in this area but one lesson in health and social care was sampled

Health and social care

186. In the sampled Year 12 lesson in this advanced vocational course, students gave presentations about clients' rights in relation to such legislation as the Disability Discrimination Act and the Patients' Charter. Students had achieved a good level of research, although their pace of presentation was sometimes too fast. To consolidate students' understanding, the teacher led purposeful discussions on important points raised. Teaching and learning were good, and standards were in line with expectations for the course.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

There was no focus subject in this area, but one lesson of general studies was sampled.

General studies

187. Teaching, learning and achievement were very good in the Year 13 lesson sampled. Students, as a group, demonstrated a good knowledge of the jury system and shared their knowledge enthusiastically with each other. The teacher extended students' understanding by skilful questioning and use of good quality resources.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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