

INSPECTION REPORT

AYLSHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Aylsham, Norwich

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 112164

Headteacher: Mr Paul Mitchell

Lead inspector: Denis Pittman

Dates of inspection: 29th November - 2nd December 2004

Inspection number: 268338

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 - 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 910
School address: Aylsham
Norwich
Norfolk
Postcode: NR11 6AN
Telephone number: (01263) 733 270
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Name of chair of Mrs Sue Platt
governors:
Date of previous April 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Aylsham is an average-sized comprehensive school for students aged 11 - 16. The number on roll is 910 (Boys 476 - Girls 434). There are relatively more boys than girls in Years 8 and 9. The socio-economic background of students is mixed, but average overall. The school is situated in the market town of Aylsham, population approximately 8000. It is a dormitory town for Norwich, having a broad spectrum of social and economic circumstances. However, the remainder of the school community is drawn from a rural environment where there are some significant areas of social deprivation. The attainment of students on entry is broadly average. The number of students with special educational needs is above average and the number with statements is well above average. There are very few students from ethnic minority groups in line with local demography. The school achieved Business and Enterprise specialist status in 2003. It is also designated as a Training School and recently received the Community Achievement Award (one of only four schools in the country to gain it). There is an established reputation for working in partnership with industry. It was one of the first schools to be selected as an Enterprise Pathfinder school. The school is currently engaged in a major building programme, which will significantly enhance its facilities.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16976	D Pittman	Lead inspector	
13786	S Walsh	Lay inspector	
4676	M Griffiths	Team inspector	Physical education
1407	P Scott	Team inspector	Mathematics
12499	M Durkin	Team inspector	English
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design
23891	P Slape	Team inspector	Design and technology Work-related learning
20497	V Williams	Team inspector	Geography History
14633	J Bannister	Team inspector	Religious education
17404	J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
22501	S Jones	Team inspector	Citizenship Music
20420	S Rawcliffe	Team inspector	Science
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Aylsham is an effective school providing a good quality of education. It has excellent links with its community. The school is led and managed well. The prevailing ethos is caring and supportive but also challenging in terms of higher expectations. Overall standards in tests and examinations are above average. Good teaching promotes good achievement. A good range of enrichment activities enhances students' personal development. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Improving standards in tests and GCSE examinations - results are above average.
- The school has established excellent links with its local community and business.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher are good; he has provided a vision and sense of purpose.
- The provision and participation in extra-curricular activities is good. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is unsatisfactory.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning are good.
- Currently, the school is not dealing effectively enough with the poor behaviour of a few students, as there is a lack of consistency in applying school's behaviour policy, particularly out of lesson time, where supervision is inadequate.
- Overall, the accommodation provision is unsatisfactory. However, the ongoing building programme will address many of these issues.
- The quality of written reports to parents is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient development of information and communication technology (ICT) and numeracy skills in some subjects.

The school has made good progress since its previous inspection. Standards in tests and GCSE examinations have risen; there has been a successful focus in relation to raising boys' achievement, particularly in literacy skills. The curriculum provision for Years 10 and 11 has been enhanced by a vocational dimension and benefits significantly through links with the community. Assessment procedures such as recording and identifying underachievement have improved, although inconsistencies in the quality of marking between subjects remain. The achievement of Business Enterprise specialist status has had a positive impact on the curriculum in terms of improved resources.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	B	B	B	C

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

Standards are broadly average on entry to the school, although there is the full range of ability. Examination and test results over time show an improving trend, which is better than the national picture. **Overall achievement is good** and is good in Years 7-9 and 10 and 11. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are above average in English, mathematics and

science. Performance in mathematics and science has improved. Overall, standards are comparable to those of similar schools. In 2004, GCSE performance was above the national average, although the targets set by the school were not met. Standards in GCSE mathematics and science are above average; they are average in English. Standards seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 are average, but are above average in Years 10 and 11. They are average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Standards in history are well below average in Year 9 and below average in Year 11. Standards in geography are well above average in Year 11. Students with special educational needs and the most able make good progress.

Students' personal qualities, including spiritual, moral and cultural development, are good. Attendance rates are very good. Attitudes to work and involvement in school life are good. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory; however, there are a few examples of poor behaviour, specifically around the school. Relationships between teachers and students are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The school is increasingly effective in identifying students who are underachieving and taking appropriate action. **The overall quality of teaching is good; it helps promote good standards of achievement.** The school is creating an ethos for learning based upon increasingly high expectations and positive working relationships. Students are achieving well because of effective teaching and the positive attitudes to learning of most students. Assessment procedures are satisfactory; the substantial amount of data collected is being increasingly used to monitor progress in an effective manner.

Overall, the school provides students with a good curriculum but it is unsatisfactory in the provision for PSHE. The gaining of specialist status has positively improved the curriculum. The caring and supportive ethos, which is evident in the school, helps students prepare for life after leaving. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good.

Procedures to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety are good. Overall support, advice and guidance are satisfactory. The support for individual students through counselling and mentoring is good. The involvement of students in the school's work and development is good. The school is popular and is oversubscribed; it enjoys a good reputation in its community for being caring and supportive. The school has good links with parents. Links with the community, business and other schools are excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led. The leadership of the headteacher is good. A strong team of middle managers support him well; they provide good leadership in the school. **Overall management of the school is satisfactory.** The governance of the school is good. Governors are effectively involved in the strategic planning for the school. The provision in citizenship does not meet all statutory requirements. The financial management of the school is very effective and efficient.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school works well with parents to support learning. They are very satisfied with most aspects of its work. Parents are provided with a good range of information about the activities of the school. There are some concerns about the disruptive behaviour of a few

students and the quality of information they receive about the progress of their children. The inspection team endorsed the view of some parents that the quality of reports is unsatisfactory. Students enjoy being at the school. They feel that they are taught well and they are helpfully supported in their academic and personal development. Students are aware of bullying by a minority. The school has dealt effectively with individual cases of bullying but recognises that it needs a more proactive approach to the complex issue of anti-social behaviour.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the provision in PSHE.
- Continue to develop the use of ICT and numeracy in subjects.
- Improve the quality of reports to parents.
- Continue to give priority to achieving consistency in the management of behaviour.

and, to meet statutory requirements for:

- Citizenship, the ICT provision in music and art and design, and elements of the PSHE programme relating to drugs and sex education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

Overall, standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are above average. Examination and test results over time show an improving trend. The overall **achievement of students is good**. In most GCSE subjects, there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, although boys do not do as well as girls in the higher levels of the National Curriculum tests. Most students continue to make good progress in their lessons, including those students with special educational needs and the most able. Standards in mathematics are above average in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11; in English, they are broadly average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, the results of examinations and tests are above average.
- Standards in the core subjects (mathematics and science) are consistently above average.
- Results at the end of Year 9 are above the national average when compared with those in similar schools.
- Achievement in Years 9 and 11, as seen in lessons, is good. The value added in each key stage is good, given students' attainment on entry.
- Overall, standards have continued to improve since the last inspection.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (34.2)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	n/a (36.3)	n/a (35.4)
science	n/a (34.7)	n/a (33.6)

Figures in brackets are for the previous year. Comparative national figures for the National Curriculum tests of 2004 were not available at the time of the inspection but reference is made about the results and trends.

1. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, the combined results were above the national average. In the individual subjects (English, mathematics and science), standards were above average. Overall, standards in these subjects were above those of similar schools. The overall trend of improvement has continued in 2004. Standards in mathematics and science are above average; the boys' performance at the higher levels in science was particularly good. There is currently no national validated data available in the core subjects to make comparisons with the school's results. Achievement in most other subjects is good and is above national expectations. At the end of Year 9, students have made good progress in their studies.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
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Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	57 (56)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (94)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	36.4 (36.4)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 157 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- In 2003, overall performance in GCSE examinations was above the national average; the trend of improvement was also above the national picture. The school's performance in comparison to similar schools was broadly average. In 2004, the school maintained its overall standard but failed to meet its projected target, mainly due to significant underachievement in information and communication technology (ICT). The students' overall GCSE performance was above average. Standards were above average in mathematics and science, but below average in English. Particularly good standards were achieved in art and design, English literature, geography and music. The results in GCSE examinations are comparable to those of similar schools.

Standards seen during the inspection

- In Years 7 to 9, standards are broadly average overall, they are above average in mathematics and science. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is generally good; this is because of effective teaching. Teachers have high expectations, which are encouraging students to achieve well, given their prior attainment in some subjects. However, students are underachieving in German and history. Achievement in the basic skills of numeracy is good; it is satisfactory in literacy.
- In Years 10 and 11, standards are broadly above average; the achievement of students is good and is very good in geography. The positive effect of the Business Enterprise status, including well managed departments and good teaching, can be clearly seen in the good standards achieved. Standards are particularly good in drama, geography and food technology. Standards in history are below average, because there is not enough challenge in some lessons and activities are inappropriate to the needs of students.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets. This is due to good quality support and clear assessment procedures, which are used to regularly monitor their progress. Clear procedures for the identification and assessment of students help to identify areas of concern, thus helping to raise standards. Students are supported mainly in the classroom working alongside their peers. They are occasionally withdrawn for literacy support, together with some individual withdrawal for other basic and social skills. However, in modern foreign languages, the needs of lower-attaining students and students with special educational needs are not always adequately addressed so that their progress is hampered.
- Students identified as gifted and talented also achieve well. An analysis of provisional 2004 GCSE results shows that most students achieved in line with expectations. There is a continued upward trend in the attainment of higher levels at the end of Year 9 for the identified cohorts of gifted and talented students, particularly for girls; it is not so consistent for boys. Targets are usually met and often exceeded. The achievement of the few students from an ethnic minority background is no different to that of other students.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Attendance rates are **very good**. Attitudes to work are **good**; behaviour is **satisfactory**. Aspects of personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good attendance rates support good achievement.
- When teaching is challenging, students have good attitudes in lessons.
- There is very good involvement in music, drama and sporting activities.
- When students are not adequately supervised, behaviour is sometimes unacceptable.

Commentary

7. Most students attend school very regularly and this supports good achievement. Systems of verifying non-attendance are good. Many students live some distance from school and travel in by bus and this sometimes affects punctuality.
8. Most students like school. They enjoy taking part in activities, especially sport, music and drama. When lessons are challenging and exciting, for example, in many mathematics and science lessons, students behave well and have very good attitudes towards their work. There are a minority of boys who are loud, boisterous and difficult to manage. Parents and students are understandably concerned about disruptive behaviour in a few lessons. The application of the school's behaviour policy is inconsistent and this can lead to students becoming resentful. Students can behave well, for example, in assemblies, but some behaviour on unsupervised corridors is disorderly. In the last academic year, there have been no permanent exclusions.
9. The school has recognised the need to improve its strategies for dealing with bullying and an anti-bullying co-ordinator has been recently appointed. Students' views have been sought via a questionnaire and the school is acting on the information. Trained students known as the Friendly Faces provide a listening ear for students with problems, including bullying, but students recognise that whilst speaking to fellow students is valuable, they cannot always resolve their problems. When senior staff are made aware of bullying issues, steps are taken to try to improve the situation and there have been notable successes in individual cases. Currently, there is insufficient preventive work to alter attitudes and perceptions of anti-social students.
10. The overall development of students' personal qualities is good. Students have a developing understanding of themselves and religious education lessons help them to develop a set of values and beliefs. Art and design and music lessons encourage students to appreciate beauty and the intangible. Strong moral messages are given in assemblies and lessons such as geography where issues like fair trade are discussed. Students have a good awareness of a moral code. Social development is satisfactory. Students can demonstrate responsibility through involvement with the Friendly Faces, being a prefect or involvement with the school council. Students do help each other in

lessons such as ICT but group work is not a strong feature of lessons. The absence of an effective PSHE programme limits social education. Younger students report that mixed age form tutor groups have led to improvement in relationships between older and younger students. Cultural development is good and there are good opportunities through art, music and drama for students to increase their understanding of their own cultures and other cultures.

11. Developing the confidence and self-esteem of students with special educational needs is a prime concern of the school. These students enjoy coming to school. They work hard and are generally well behaved. There is, however, an undercurrent of inappropriate behaviour from other students, which has a detrimental effect on their learning.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	876	91	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	16	0	0

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

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003/4

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
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School data	5.5
National data	6.9

School data	0.3
National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The curriculum and provision for resources is good; however, there are unsatisfactory aspects of accommodation. Students are achieving well because of effective teaching and the positive attitudes to learning of most students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment procedures are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' effective planning and very secure subject knowledge help to promote and develop students' skills.
- The active encouragement of enthusiastic teachers helps motivate students and usually leads to a high level of productivity.
- A good variety of teaching approaches are used to stimulate students' learning.
- Work in a few lessons is insufficiently geared to the needs of individual students.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 114 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (2%)	24 (21%)	46 (40%)	37 (32%)	4 (4%)	1 (1%)	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.

12. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and expertise; many show an enjoyment of their subject that is often enthusiastically shared with students. Art and design teachers present lessons effectively, often using their own work to help students move forward. Their assessing, prompting and encouraging of students in lessons maintains a creative, busy learning atmosphere. Teachers of modern foreign languages have a very good command of the languages they teach. However, in the majority of lessons, students do not benefit from these very good role models because the languages are often used ineffectively or erratically to conduct activities. Lessons are well explained and provide a clear view of the teachers' high expectations. In ICT lessons, the enthusiasm of teachers stimulates students to work hard. Tasks are challenging as teachers do not supply answers but encourage students to think problems through.
13. Teachers usually relate well to students and are usually able to motivate them effectively. There is usually an atmosphere of achievement and mutual respect. Students have the confidence to question teachers and develop new ideas and increase their understanding. In physical education lessons, relationships with students are generally strong, resulting in most students enjoying their activities and working amicably together. Detailed planning together with good classroom

organisation and a clear style of teaching, often result in good learning. Music lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives which are shared with the students so they know what they are expected to learn. Varied activities enable students to develop their musical learning effectively. Lessons are well resourced, which helps to engage students and hold their attention. However, teachers' planning in some modern foreign languages lessons does not always take sufficient account of the needs of all students; this results in students encountering difficulty in achieving tasks and not always experiencing success. This in turn has an adverse effect upon their confidence in learning languages. History teachers generally have too low expectations in Years 8 and 9 and many students have low motivation and are reluctant learners. Tasks set are often not satisfactorily completed with boys in particular reluctant writers. This results in underachievement.

14. Many teachers are keen to use a variety of teaching approaches in their lessons. In drama, there is an emphasis on varied activities; personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the students. Some mathematics lessons are excellent; in these situations, very skilled teaching with high expectations, rigorous demands and stimulating challenge compels students to think deeply. In a very good Year 8 science lesson about insulation, the start used references to a linked school in Russia and students enjoyed wearing real Russian cold weather clothing. This was followed by experimental work on insulation; practical details were clearly established through effective questioning. In a Year 11 ICT lesson, the teacher made very effective use of current news events to help students to understand how developments in ICT are affecting society, specifically the prevention and detection of crime. The students were very motivated and were able to give appropriate examples. In the best English lessons, there is a brisk pace, students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect.
15. Occasionally, work is not well matched to students' capabilities. This results in higher-attaining students not being appropriately challenged and lower-attaining students not being able to fully grasp concepts. The latter can result in unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, as students struggle and lose interest. There are occasions when a lack of rigour in behaviour management results in these students, and usually their classmates, not learning effectively. For example, in science lessons where student attitudes and behaviour were less good, it was as a result of weaker student management and where students had been insufficiently involved in learning activities. In a small minority of English lessons, students learn less than in others because the behaviour of a few students adversely affects their learning and classroom management strategies are less strong. In some physical education lessons, there are high levels of non-participation, particularly among boys; this incidence has implications for safety and adequate supervision of behaviour. In general, behaviour management in lessons is satisfactory but requires greater consistency in implementation throughout the school.
16. Teachers are well informed about students with special educational needs. Most of them plan work at an appropriate level for students with learning difficulties as well as those who show exceptional ability. However, practice is variable despite guidance that has been offered and in some subjects students are unable to access the

curriculum. Learning support assistants work closely with teachers, but are not always sufficiently briefed prior to the lessons they are going to work in. Most are valued for their contributions to students' learning. They, along with teachers, are instrumental in monitoring the progress of students at regular intervals.

17. The overall quality of assessment procedures is satisfactory. Assessment information is used effectively to track the progress and achievement of students in relation to their targets. The school has good procedures in place to identify underachievement and appropriate action is taken to support students who are not achieving their targets through liaison with teachers, form tutors and, where necessary, parents. For students whose achievement is causing concern, the school supports them effectively through its study skills course and mentoring. All teachers have access to assessment information and detailed records are kept. However, the use of this information is in the early stages of development and achieving consistency is a priority for the school.
18. There are clear guidelines for assessing students' work but as yet practice across the school is variable. Within subjects, procedures for assessing students' progress and achievement on a day-to-day basis are satisfactory overall. Work is usually marked regularly and students are aware of how they are doing. However, in Years 7 to 9, the use of National Curriculum levels is not consistent across and within subjects so that students do not always have a clear idea of the standard of their work. In science, physical education, art and design and food technology, for example, students are made aware of the levels they are working at and how to improve but in other subjects this is not the case. In Years 10 and 11, marking is often linked to examination board criteria and gives students a good understanding of the standards they are working at and clear guidance about how to improve.
19. In most subjects, students are taught in sets. However, setting, which is based on English sets, is not accurate for other subjects. Teaching groups can contain a wide range of ability. In their planning teachers place too much reliance upon these setting arrangements. Assessment information is not always used effectively and the needs of pupils of differing ability are not always taken sufficiently into account, so that in lessons lower-attaining students sometimes find tasks too difficult and higher-attaining students are not always appropriately challenged to enable them to reach their potential. In art and design assessment information is used very well to respond to students' needs but in other subjects there is scope for improvement.

The curriculum

The curriculum provision is **good**. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs and aspirations of the students well. Courses are well planned to ensure effective curriculum continuity and, as a result, students achieve well. Statutory requirements are met fully, except in the provision of citizenship, sex education and health education, including drugs awareness, which are components of an unsatisfactory PSHE course. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory but is soon to be improved.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of students, especially those in Years 10 and 11 and those with special educational needs.

- Good curriculum enrichment, including extra-curricular activities; in sport, art and music, they are very good.
- Curriculum provision in art and design is very good; in PSHE, it is unsatisfactory.
- Curriculum links with industry, business, the community and other schools and colleges are strong.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 are well prepared for continuing their studies or entering employment.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in some curriculum subjects and this affects students' achievement.
- Statutory requirements are not met in citizenship, drugs awareness education and sex education.

Commentary

20. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the aptitudes and aspirations of individual students, especially those in Years 10 and 11. The design of the curriculum meets the socially inclusive needs of students by addressing well the access and equality of opportunity in curricular choice. The curriculum meets statutory requirements fully, except in the provision of citizenship, sex education and health education, including drugs awareness education, which are components of a PSHE course for which the planning lacks coherence and insufficient curriculum time is allocated. The curriculum provision for art and design is very good.
21. The time allocated for the teaching of individual subjects is broadly in line with the national picture except in the provision for PSHE and modern foreign languages. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum time for a second language is too low. Grouping arrangements are generally satisfactory with weaknesses in English, mathematics and history. In Years 10 and 11, curriculum choice and grouping arrangements are good and students follow a wide range of academic and vocational courses, which are well matched to their individual needs, future studies and careers patterns. Since the previous inspection, the good provision for careers education and individual careers advice has changed. The careers education within PSHE is insufficiently detailed. Recently, the school has introduced an ASDAN course to improve the specific needs of lower-attaining students. The curriculum provides satisfactorily for the provision of key skills. However, opportunities to use numeracy and ICT are not fully exploited in all subjects of the curriculum.
22. Recently, carefully considered and well-planned change, prompted and promoted by local and national initiatives, has resulted in an evolving curriculum to meet the changing needs of students. For students in Years 7 to 9, the implementation of the National Strategy has had a satisfactory impact upon the curriculum, especially in the areas of planning, progression and approaches to learning. However, monitoring and evaluating the impact has not been sufficiently rigorous. In some areas, for example, the use of 'catch up' learning in English and mathematics, provision has not formed part of the curriculum for lower-attaining students or those who have difficulty in accessing the curriculum in Year 7. The provision for the higher-attaining students in Year 7 is good, but this extension of the curriculum does not provide for similar students in other year groups. The school has been particularly successful in implementing innovations for students in Years 10 and 11 as part of the 14-19 expanded curriculum reforms aimed at promoting vocational education. The recent

recognition of the school as a specialist business college is beginning to enrich and influence successful change in numerous parts of the curriculum. Notable curriculum strengths are to be found in the curriculum initiatives and vocational courses arising from an extensive range of effective partnerships with the community, industry, business, primary and secondary schools and colleges of further education. Overall, the provision for work-related learning is good.

23. The quality and range of extra-curricular provision, enrichment activities and support outside the school day is good. Participation in extra-curricular activities in sport, art and music is very good and is a strength of the school. Parents, who have been actively supportive in helping the school obtain specialist business college status, express appreciation at the range and quality of the extra-curricular and enrichment activities which the school organises. A wide variety of clubs and activities take place at lunchtime and after school. These include support for learning such as private study, homework, revision and booster classes for students who are seeking assistance or who have been identified as underachieving in some curriculum areas. Activity days when the timetable is suspended are popular amongst students because field trips, residential journeys and day visits to nearby places take place. Curriculum enrichment, to help students support their learning of modern languages, takes place annually with residential visits to France and Germany. An international link has been established with Kenya.
24. The provision for students with special educational needs and others with learning difficulties is good. An attached special needs unit is closely integrated into the work of the school, for example, well-matched support staff assist subject teachers in the classroom and are readily accessible to help with appropriate advice and support. There are inconsistencies between subjects in lesson planning for students with special educational needs; in history, it is unsatisfactory whilst in most other subjects it is good, and in art and design and religious education, it is very good. The provision for gifted and talented students is good overall.
25. The overall accommodation provision is unsatisfactory. The new building due for completion in September promises to transform the school and remove many of the problems caused by overcrowding. Some of the fabric of the building is old and in need of repair, including the roof of the swimming pool. The accommodation for English and mathematics is dispersed around the school, although both departments will be relocated to the new building in September, when they will enjoy the latest technological advances to assist students' learning. The science department has been refurbished but its teaching rooms and laboratories are dispersed around the building. Business education is taught in new purpose-built premises including a conference room. The teaching areas for art and design and design and technology are too small for larger groups. Textiles now has its own room but graphic design is taught in an unsuitable resistant materials workshop. Music has one specialist room and overflow classes are taught in a geography room. The accommodation for students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory, although the area for students with specific learning difficulties is good. The building work has also reduced the break and lunchtime play areas as well as 'eating into' the outdoor physical education all-weather pitch. The site is well maintained by an efficient site manager and his staff. CCTV cameras and a recently refurbished intruder alarm system ensure the security and safety of the students.

26. Across the school, resources are usually good. Most subjects have good basic resources and interactive whiteboards are available for teaching. However, most subjects are restricted in their use of ICT by the lack of available computers and appropriate software. The library is adequate but is closed every day at 13.00 hours, limiting use at lunchtime.
27. There is a good match between the number and quality of teachers and the needs of the curriculum. Subjects are taught by specialists. The school has a good range of support staff. The support for learning department is well staffed. Along with an experienced special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), there are sufficient specialist learning support teachers and teaching assistants. Support staff are enthusiastic and committed to working with students with special educational needs and their effective deployment ensures the curricular needs of these students are met.
28. Curriculum improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school has made very good strides in making the curriculum more relevant to the needs of the students, particularly those in Years 10 and 11. There is an improved balance in the design and technology curriculum and the poor accommodation continues to be used as effectively as possible. The PSHE curriculum is now unsatisfactory and ICT across the curriculum remains to be improved. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities has improved with greater provision for enrichment and extension activities.

Care, guidance and support

The school has **good** procedures to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety. Overall support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **satisfactory**. Student involvement in the school's work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The learning mentor provides very effective support for Year 11 students who are at risk of underachieving.
- A very good induction programme ensures that students settle quickly in Year 7.
- Very vulnerable students are usually well supported.

Commentary

29. Staff understand child protection issues and work effectively with local agencies within locally agreed procedures. Procedures to monitor children in public care are good. Health and safety procedures are adequate and departments such as science, design and technology and physical education work hard to ensure statutory requirements are met. Procedures to look after sick or injured students are good. However, due to difficulties in recruiting lunchtime supervisors, supervision around school is insufficiently rigorous.

30. Induction procedures for Year 7 students are very effective and are appreciated by parents and students. A three-day visit at the end of Year 6 enables prospective students to experience their new timetable and alleviates many worries.
31. Major changes have been made to the school's arrangements for pastoral care. Students are now looked after within a house system with each house and linked tutor groups providing for all age groups. Older students have found the changes difficult and both students and pastoral staff are only just becoming comfortable with the new system. However, most students know and trust an adult on the staff who is concerned for them. Enhanced routines to match the requirements of the new system are not fully in place. Heads of house are working hard to implement the new system but they lack effective support, from external agencies, to deal with particularly problematic students.
32. Systematic systems ensure that students' achievement is tracked and a good range of information is available to subject teachers and pastoral staff. Students in Year 11 who are at risk of underachieving including falling behind with coursework, report that they very effectively supported by the learning mentor. However, the learning mentor has no permanent base and this situation inhibits the quality and range of work with students. Older students are well supported by business mentors. The range of support for difficult students in Years 7 to 9 is more limited.
33. The need to provide effective advice and guidance, including health, drugs and relationship education, under the new arrangements for providing pastoral care have not been effectively considered and have had a detrimental effect on the quality of support. Careers education is satisfactory overall. Provision from the Connexions service ensures that pupils have adequate support when important choices have to be made. Pupils have access to a careers interview by request. There is a satisfactory programme of work experience. The careers library is of satisfactory quality. Most students have plans for the future and high-quality links have helped many students to think clearly about their futures. Students are effectively consulted on their views via the school council and questionnaires.
34. Support and guidance for students with special educational needs are strong. There are clear procedures for their identification and assessment and they are well supported in most areas of the curriculum. Every student gains at least one GCSE. Good quality Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are in place. Targets are structured in order for them to be realistic and achievable. They are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. Where students have statements, IEP's closely reflect their recommendations. Governors are well aware of their statutory obligations and ensure that these are met. The special educational needs resource base provides a safe haven during the day where students can have their lunch and play games. Students are full members of the school community. The school is very inclusive and seeks to remove any stigma attached to special educational needs. The success of this is seen in the progress students make and is also due to the approachability of all members of the department.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

Links with parents are **good**. Links with the community, business and other schools are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Modern technology is used well to improve communication with parents.
- Reports are of unsatisfactory quality.
- There are very good links with primary schools.
- Excellent links with the local community and business extend educational and social opportunities for students and parents.
- Links with local colleges have been used very effectively to extend the 14-19 curriculum.

Commentary

35. Parents receive essential information about the work of the school through well-presented newsletters a useful prospectus and a full governors' report to parents. This information is supplemented by the Simply Click website that provides an effective forum for discussion between the school and parents. Written reports about students' progress are unsatisfactory. Reports are created using word-banks and as a consequence they are very similar for students of varying abilities. These bland reports tell parents very little about what their children know, understand and can do and the progress they have made. A subject review day and traditional parents' evenings provide parents with a valuable opportunity to discuss their children's progress with form tutors and subject teachers. There is an active Friends Association, which raises substantial sums of money and arranges educational events such as a drugs education evening for parents.
36. There are highly productive links with external organisations designed to raise aspirations and improve the local quality of life, and which have led to a national award for community involvement. There are close links with Aylsham learning community strategy and family learning. Courses for parents from local schools have been very well attended and have helped parents and carers support children's learning. The local community has supported the school's sports hall bid. The school has supported training of local voluntary workers. There has been extensive involvement in local arts projects. Very good links with local industries have enhanced the work-related learning curriculum, especially in areas such as food technology.
37. The school has a very impressive range of formal and informal links with local schools and colleges. Very effective links with local primary schools ensure curriculum continuity and help students settle quickly. The development of The Grapevine Saturday activities for older primary-aged pupils has enthused pupils and brought more parents into contact with the secondary school. A specialist mathematics teacher who works in both the primary and secondary school has very effectively promoted higher standards in mathematics. The school works very closely with other local secondary schools through Federation arrangements. The employment of a learning mentor through these arrangements has greatly improved support for the oldest students. Older students have very good access to college courses. These links significantly strengthen the school's 14 - 19 curriculum. Students very much

appreciate this high-quality provision and find it very motivating. Students are provided with a good range of information about post-16 opportunities.

38. The school makes every effort to establish good working links with parents of students who have special educational needs. Parents are involved at all stages of the identification and assessment process. They are well informed about students' progress. Particularly close links with parents are established through the SpeLD unit where home visits are sometimes necessary.
39. The school works well with parents to support learning. Parents are very satisfied with most aspects of its work. They are provided with a good range of information about activities and forthcoming events. They have some concerns about the disruptive behaviour of a few students and the quality of information they receive about the progress of their children.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led. The leadership of the headteacher is **good**. A strong team of middle managers support him well; they provide good leadership in the school. Overall management of the school is satisfactory. The governance of the school is **good**. Governors are effectively involved in the strategic planning for the school. The financial management of the school is very effective and efficient.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's vision has provided a sense of purpose and direction for the school.
- Governors make a good contribution to the effective leadership of the school, but some statutory requirements are not met, particularly in relation to citizenship, and ICT provision in art and design and music.
- There is insufficient staff in the senior leadership team; this has put increased pressure on the team to cover all the associated management responsibilities adequately.
- The leadership of science and the SpeLD Unit are very good.
- The management and co-ordination of PSHE are unsatisfactory.
- Middle managers carry out their delegated roles well.
- Financial management and control is very good, it supports effective decision making.

Commentary

40. The headteacher provides good leadership; there is a clear sense of direction for the school. A particular strength has been the ability to turn his vision into a coherent strategic plan for future development. He has instilled an ethos, which celebrates success and focuses on the individual needs of the students. It builds upon the principles of respect for the individual and high expectations, so as to sustain and improve standards. A strong emphasis has been placed on achieving consistency in assessment procedures and improving the effectiveness of learning in lessons through supportive self-review. The school is managed satisfactorily with a purpose to consolidate strengths and promote consistency of practice. This consistency is, however, lacking in the management of behaviour in the school.

41. The management of the senior leadership team is satisfactory. The team is hard-pressed to fulfil all its management responsibilities because of the limited number of staff on the team. Individual senior managers have a broad range of management tasks for which they are accountable. These are mostly carried out well but there is lack of focus in some areas such as the monitoring of behaviour management procedures and PSHE co-ordination. The quality assurance procedures that operate within the school are effective. A systematic review of performance for each subject leads to targets being drawn up for both the whole school and individual subjects. Each target has clear criteria, so that its success or otherwise can be measured and the level of planning for meeting these targets is appropriately detailed. Consequently, the standards achieved by the school, particularly in GCSE examinations, have been sustained. The school development plan is detailed and focuses effectively on major priorities.
42. The overall quality of middle management in the school is good, with particular strengths being evident in art and design, science and the SpeLD Unit. For example, assessment procedures and the monitoring of outcomes are used very well to guide learning programmes in science and to identify underachievement. The strategic and curriculum planning in most subjects is good. There are some weaknesses, however; the leadership and management of the PSHE programme is unsatisfactory. Planning is inadequate; it does not provide continuity and coherence in teaching and learning in this area.
43. The overall governance of the school is good. The governors show a strong commitment to the school and are knowledgeable about all aspects of the school's work. The background information compiled for governors' meetings is detailed and informative. They are pro-active in their intentions for the school. For example, they have been particularly active in promoting improvements to the school's buildings and its environment and in acquiring specialist school status. There are some statutory issues which need to be addressed in relation to citizenship, drugs and sex education, and ICT requirements in music and art and design. The governing body is an effective team and working relationships with the staff are good. Governors produced an informed and detailed development plan for their own team. Annual meetings with parents are carefully recorded; these minutes show the care governors take to explain the school's work to parents. Helpful information on the required areas is given in the annual report. The prospectus is an attractive and informative document, which reflects well the school's values and work.
44. The school's staff performance management process is well structured and is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A programme of professional development effectively supports teachers and teaching assistants; it takes account of individual, department and whole-school priorities.
45. The school pays due regard to the Code of Practice for special educational needs where statutory requirements are fully met.
46. The school is currently without a special educational needs co-ordinator. Leadership and management of the assistant co-ordinator are good. The department is functioning well and is continuing to maintain close links with the SpeLD Unit. Guidelines relating to teachers' planning in relation to individual needs of students

have not yet fully impacted on classroom practice. Materials are sometimes inappropriate and tasks are provided which cannot be completed in the time available. Funding has been used very effectively to provide Learning Support assistance for the mathematics department.

47. Developments in the school are based on high-quality financial management and control. This is reflected in the detailed monitoring of expenditure in relation to Business Enterprise status, the effective management of the budget and strategic planning related to the financial impact of 'workforce reforms'. The school development plan is effectively linked to budgetary allocations. The plan clearly identifies whole-school priorities such as improving the curricular provision, a focus on the quality of student learning, all within the context of sustaining and raising standards.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,993,381
Total expenditure	3,023,624
Expenditure per student	3,322

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	155,990
Balance carried forward to the next year	125,744

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Unit for students with specific learning difficulties

Provision for students with specific learning difficulties is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good specialist teaching and support develops good strategies for helping students to overcome their difficulties.
- Students are very well supported in mainstream, enabling good access to the curriculum.
- Accommodation is very good and creates a high-quality learning environment.

Commentary

48. The Unit is one of three in the county, catering specifically for students who have difficulty in reading and spelling words. There are currently 16 students on roll, all of whom have statements of special educational need. The Unit is staffed by a qualified full-time teacher and three part-time learning support assistants who also have relevant qualifications. The inclusion of students with dyslexia as full and active members of the school community is very successful. Students make good progress, often overcoming quite severe difficulties to achieve well in examinations. Activities are designed to give them as much independence as possible and they themselves work hard to achieve this.
49. The quality of teaching and support for students in the Unit is very good and enables them to have good access to the curriculum. Students who do not follow the modern foreign languages curriculum follow programmes designed to improve their reading

and spelling difficulties. The support which students receive is very good and provides them with good access to the curriculum. It has a positive impact on their confidence and the development of their self-esteem. Students withdrawn from lessons for specific help undertake special programmes to help them to cope with their difficulties. On these occasions, care is taken to ensure that they are not withdrawn from the same lessons.

50. The use of ICT is very prominent and, due to students' problems being so different, programmes are matched to individual needs. Assessment and tracking of students' progress is very thorough with parents and carers closely involved. Accommodation is purpose built and creates a high-quality learning environment. Resources for supporting students with specific learning difficulties are very good, particularly ICT software.
51. Leadership and management of the Unit are very good. There is close co-operation between the Unit and the special educational needs department to the mutual benefit of all identified students. Teachers are made aware of all relevant information relating to students' learning difficulties. Clear guidelines are provided to ensure that they encourage the full participation of students. Any work undertaken with students is carefully logged and provides informative ongoing records.

Specialist feature

52. The school has been a designated training school for six years. The work is co-ordinated by an advanced skills teacher (AST) specialising in initial teacher training (ITT). The school is fully involved in a number of initiatives with the Teachers Training Agency (TTA), local education authority, and several universities and training institutions, as well as being a school centred initial training, and graduate teacher scheme provider.
53. Several departments offer professional development and teacher training practice, and the teaching and support staff at the school benefit from the continuing professional development opportunities they can easily access on the school site. A number of staff provide mentoring and tutoring for trainees, and professional development, including meeting the TTA standards for English, mathematics and ICT that all trainees need. The institution is part of a partnership for all Norfolk and Suffolk schools and is in touch with other providers in other parts of the United Kingdom.
54. The positive features of this initiative are fully appreciated by governors, senior managers and departments. Over six years, the co-ordinator has ensured that any potentially negative effects, especially for students, are prevented, for example, no student in the school is taught at any time by too many trainee teachers. The professional development for the workload initiative provides training from foundation degree to full qualified teacher status, and is available to part-time as well as full-time staff. Gains include recruitment and retention of specialist staff, and access to good professional development for all that are employed at the school, in any capacity, as well as members of the local community the school serves.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improving standards by Year 9 students because of good leadership.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and sometimes good, leading to expected achievement.
- The leadership of the department is good.
- Students are not all aware of how to improve.
- Work is not always matched to students' needs and therefore a minority of students are not challenged enough.

Commentary

55. Students' performance in national tests, over the last few years, has been in line with the national average. Girls' results have been better than those of boys. In 2003, results were better than those of similar schools. No national data for 2004 is available to make direct comparisons with the school's performance but standards reflect continuing improvement. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, standards were marginally below the national average but performance in English literature was above average. Overall, students not did perform as well in English as compared with mathematics and science. The overall achievement of students in tests and examinations is satisfactory.
56. In work seen, students' attainment by the end of Years 9 and 11 is average. The achievement of students is satisfactory at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. This is improving because when they joined the school, students' standards were lower in writing. Standards in literacy, especially at the level expected nationally, have improved. Most students have a basic knowledge and understanding of literacy skills by the time they have been in the school for three years. Their oral skills are good in general classroom discussion but are not so strong when students give presentations of their project work. Writing standards are average; most students have grasped key skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar, although some boys' work is poorly presented. Writing is creative and students enjoy producing imaginative and descriptive stories. The standards of all students are benefiting from a wider choice of writing assignments to meet variation of abilities in classes. The use of ICT is limited because of restricted access and it is not used to develop writing standards and the quality of teaching. Students with special educational needs and the able and talented achieve as well as other students because their needs are planned for and support is effective.

57. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory; it is sometimes good. In a small minority of lessons, students learn less than in others because the behaviour of a few students adversely affects their learning. Classroom management strategies in these situations are not strong enough. In the good lessons, there is a brisk pace, students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. The quality of marking is satisfactory; students require more guidance as to how to improve their work. In some lessons, the activities lack sufficient variety to deal effectively with the learning needs of different ability groups. Students enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. These positive relationships help promote students' learning. In a Year 11 lesson on examination technique, the students responded well to the challenge of the ideas being presented. Consequently, they learned well and knew what to do to improve their grades.
58. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department has developed a cohesive team and specialist teachers share a vision of improving standards. The overall quality of management is satisfactory; new systems and procedures have been introduced. This is bringing a greater consistency to the work of the department. For example, teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and departmental responsibilities. Procedures for assessment are clear and used by the head of department to set individual students' targets. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and affects students' learning. Access to ICT facilities is limited; in consequence, there are missed opportunities to develop different approaches to students' learning.
59. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Students' standards have been maintained and literacy teaching has been used effectively to target further improvements in language development. This exemplifies the department's commitment to raising standards. The department has a secure basis for further improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. Overall achievement in literacy is satisfactory. Measures taken by senior management and in particular, teacher training, led to improvements in students' literacy skills. A range of texts, in all subjects, encourages the use of technical and specialist vocabulary, especially in geography, art and design and English. The library runs a successful induction programme for students using professional librarians. The English department has dictionaries available in each classroom; key words are displayed prominently in most classrooms to familiarise students with these words. This promotes students' range of vocabulary. Students discuss their work enthusiastically and sensibly in most subjects and show respect to their peers and staff by listening attentively. Students' oral and listening skills are broadly average. In some subjects, such as history, there is insufficient attention paid to analytical writing. Effective use of writing frames was seen in ICT lessons. Reading fluency is encouraged and seen to particular effect in English and geography - standards in reading are above average. Students' writing standards are comparatively weak when they enter the school and the school takes this seriously. Consequently, there is an improvement in skills by the time students leave the school. Most staff undertake the teaching of basic literacy skills conscientiously as a means of improving standards.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in French. The quality of students' writing in French and German is above average and students have a good understanding of grammar.
- Standards attained in GCSE examinations in French and German are improving.
- Students' attitudes are positive and behaviour is good.
- The needs of lower-attaining students and students with special educational needs are not always adequately addressed so that their progress is hampered.
- Opportunities for students to use the language themselves are limited and students are not confident in speaking and responding spontaneously.
- The curriculum arrangements for German in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory so that students fail to achieve as well as they should.

Commentary

61. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. In the last three years, standards attained in GCSE results have improved in both French and German. In the last year, boys' attainment in examinations has improved and is now in line with that of boys nationally. Assessment procedures are good and in Years 10 and 11 assessment information is used very effectively to raise standards.
62. In GCSE results in 2003, the proportion of candidates achieving A*-C grades was below average in German and, in 2004, broadly in line with national averages. In 2003, the proportion of candidates gaining A*-C grades in French was above average and, in 2004, well above average compared to those in all schools. The proportion of students attaining an A*-G grade was broadly average. However, a much higher proportion of students were entered for examination than is the case nationally so that comparisons with national figures are unreliable. In relation to their prior attainment, this represents good achievement in French and satisfactory achievement in German. In 2003, the proportion of girls gaining A*-C grades was well above average, whilst that of boys was well below average. In 2004, the gap has narrowed with boys' attainment being close to the national average.
63. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average in French and below average in German; students achieve satisfactorily in French. However, in German due to less time given to the subject achievement is unsatisfactory. In work seen there is no significant difference between boys' and girls' achievement. By Year 9, students can describe events in the past, present and future and express simple opinions. However, they cannot operate easily in French or German without reference to notes and written prompts. This hinders them in responding spontaneously and sometimes has an adverse effect upon pronunciation and therefore their confidence. Students whose standards of literacy are below average do not achieve as well as they should when the emphasis in lessons is predominantly on reading and writing. The curriculum provision for German in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory and hampers students' progress

over time. Time allocated to German is low and lessons are poorly spaced over the two-week timetable so that students find it difficult to build on previous learning.

64. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average in French and, in German, they are average; students achieve well in both languages during Years 10 and 11. The quality of students' writing is above average in both languages; they display a good understanding of grammar and apply it accurately and successfully to express their ideas. They link ideas effectively using a variety of methods such as relative clauses and adverbial phrases. By Year 11, students can write at length and in detail on a variety of topics such as their ambitions and their relationships and for a variety of purposes including narrative and formal letters. Students have a good understanding of grammar, a good range of vocabulary and structures. In German, writing is more reliant on models and the range of language used more limited. Students do not have a confident grasp of vocabulary and structures in German because of the intermittent nature of the provision. Speaking and listening are not as good as in reading and writing in both languages; students are hesitant and lack confidence in responding or speaking without reference to notes or models.
65. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and, in Years 10 and 11 it is good in both French and German. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach. However, in the majority of lessons, students do not benefit from these very good role models because the languages are often used ineffectively or erratically to conduct activities. Although instructions are given in the language being learned, the English translation is often given too readily, eliminating students' need to listen to the original. As a result, opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills are missed. Opportunities to practise informally in pairs increase students' confidence but are often limited in lessons. Lessons are usually well planned with appropriate activities and resources and short, manageable steps in learning. Presentations are clear using visuals and the board and students rapidly understand and use new language or identify and apply patterns themselves as a result. Teachers monitor students' progress closely in writing and speaking activities and students make good progress but some lower-attaining students have difficulty with listening and reading activities because they are not always given the means to succeed.
66. The emphasis in some lessons is on reading and writing to the detriment of speaking and listening; this encourages students' dependence on written notes and, in turn, inhibits their confidence in speaking and responding. In the majority of lessons, students are well behaved, listen attentively and are concerned to do well, but they lose concentration and become restless when not directly involved in activities or their needs are not taken sufficiently into account. In a Year 11 French lesson, students became more confident in describing events in the past and expressing opinions through a well sequenced pair and group activities to produce a piece of extended spoken narrative, linking ideas together effectively. A Year 10 German class made good progress learning how to give their opinions about school subjects because of effective questioning and clear guidance, coupled with opportunities to practise informally in pairs. However, in a Year 9, French lesson, steps in learning were not clear enough and students found difficulty in describing themselves and others because presentations were unclear and they were not given the opportunity to practise key vocabulary and phrases. Assessment procedures are good, marking is

regular, thorough and gives very clear advice about how to improve linked closely to examination criteria in Years 10 and 11. However in Years 7 to 9 marking does not give students a clear idea of how well they are progressing or the standards they are achieving. Assessment data is not always used effectively to address the needs of groups of differing ability within lessons to enable all students to experience success.

67. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers work well as a team and share ideas on a regular basis. Examination results are analysed and appropriate action is taken to raise standards. Policies are clear and applied consistently. Assessment procedures in Years 10 and 11 are effective in raising standards. In Years 7 to 9, setting arrangements are not accurate because they are based on English sets. This means that teaching groups contain a wide range of language ability. Teachers' planning does not always take sufficient account of the needs of all students; this results in students encountering difficulty in achieving tasks and not always experiencing success. This in turn has an adverse effect upon their confidence in learning languages. The department has close links with centres in France and Germany and provides successful exchange programmes to both countries. The use of ICT is limited by the lack of appropriate software to support and extend students' learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are above average.
- The positive attitudes of most students, especially those in Years 7 to 9, are helping them to achieve well.
- The overall quality of teaching is good with some excellent features.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons.
- The leadership of the department is good but the monitoring of some aspects of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough.

Commentary

68. Achievement is good overall, including by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Most students, who have average attainment on entry, make good progress from Year 7 to Year 11. In 2004, results in tests and examinations, for both 14 and 16-year-olds, were above the national averages. Standards for 14-year-old students have remained consistently above the national average since the previous inspection and have increased more than the national trend. In 2004, higher-attaining students did well. Overall, students performed better in mathematics than they did in English but not as well as science. There was no marked difference between the performance of boys and girls. Standards are above those of similar schools.
69. In 2003, there was a sharp drop in the results for 16-year-old students, especially those of the boys. Following appropriate attention to the staffing issues causing the decline, GCSE higher grades (A*-C) in this year's examinations rose to a level slightly above those since the previous inspection and before 2003. There was no significant

difference in performance between boys and girls. In 2004, students' performance in mathematics was similar to that in English, but less than in science. Since the previous inspection, the performance of the highest-attaining students has consistently fallen short of national figures. There is some underachievement amongst a few higher-attaining and average-attaining students in Years 10 and 11. Closer monitoring and appropriate counselling of individual students is now addressing the issue.

70. Current standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above average. Students, including those with learning difficulties, do well because they have a secure grasp of the basic rules of number, which they use correctly to extend, develop and transfer knowledge and understanding into new areas of learning. Most students, especially those in Years 7 to 9, do well because of their positive attitudes towards learning. From Year 7, students solve problems mentally with improving speed and accuracy. In Year 8, students use developing mathematical skills in manipulating numbers successfully and showing different methods for solving problems correctly. By the end of Year 9, higher- and average-attaining students exploit confidently their numerical skills to investigate and solve increasingly complex problems involving negative numbers and squares of numbers. They understand and apply the interrelationships between fractions, decimals, percentages, ratios and proportions and describe their reasoning well. In Years 10 and 11, higher-attaining students make very good progress in solving linear and binomial algebraic equations using factors or graphs. They could do better in re-arranging formulae by transposition. Students' skills in the use of calculators are good.
71. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. The quality ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Where lessons were judged excellent, very skilled teaching with high expectations, rigorous demands and stimulating challenge compelled students to think deeply. Where learning support is available to teachers, the provision is used very effectively, especially for higher-attaining pupils in Year 7 and those with special educational needs. The use of the guidelines for the National Numeracy Strategy has influenced positively the planning and methods of teaching but without consistency between teachers. Many features of the strategy have been incorporated into the teaching, but consolidation of learning at the end of a lesson is an area for attention. Assessment is used effectively. Targets for the department are well used to raise standards and individual students are fully aware of what more they must do to reach their full potential.
72. Leadership is good. Teachers are committed to improvement. Following a period of staff change and uncertainty, recent appointments, including a new team leader, are providing vision and momentum for planned change and improvement. Management is satisfactory. Daily management functions are well covered but essential tasks related to sharing good practice and monitoring aspects of teaching and learning are insufficiently rigorous in their application. Teachers, including those who are in training, have access to quality advice, guidance, support and professional development.
73. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards have improved, boys and girls are now performing similarly and achievement is better. Assessment for learning has improved. There is no unsatisfactory teaching, however,

the insufficient use of ICT remains a weakness. New leadership, improved accommodation and better resources for teaching and learning in the near future, means that the department is well poised to improve standards still further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. Students' competence in numeracy is good. From a sound and secure knowledge and understanding of basic numerical techniques when they enter Year 7, students make good progress in using and applying an increasing range of skills to help them to confidently and successfully address more complex ideas. Students have good mental skills because these are exercised in starter activities at the beginning of most lessons. Students are competent in the use of mathematical notation and terms. They use technical language correctly and appropriately. By the end of Year 9, students are using an increasing range of algebraic and other mathematical techniques such as solving equations, determining the geometrical properties of shapes and plotting and interpreting graphs. At the end of Year 11, higher-attaining students use number skills to analyse and evaluate data, predict and explain probabilities. Lower-attaining students taking GCSE foundation mathematics in Year 11 are well prepared in the use of basic numeracy.
75. This use of mathematics across the curriculum is generally unsatisfactory. The students' knowledge, understanding and skills in applying and using numeracy are not sufficiently exploited in other subjects to help further their learning. In design and technology, geography, history and English, numeracy is used as and when needed. The application of numeracy is not always well matched to students' abilities in mathematics. The numeracy policy does not emerge with any consistency across the curriculum. Very few subjects have a policy or show opportunities for the use of number in the schemes of work and in lesson plans. Any use of numeracy is incidental rather than planned.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are well-qualified teachers who teach effectively; this leads to improving attainment for students at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Very good leadership, good management and the mutually supportive team of teachers and technicians are moving the department forwards.
- The departmental database, allowing tracking and monitoring of students, is used very well.
- Students have very positive attitudes and behave well, making learning effective.
- There is insufficient variety in teaching approaches or materials, in some lessons, to support the learning needs of lower-attaining students.

Commentary

76. Compared to all schools nationally, attainment of students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was above the national average; similar standards were achieved in 2004. Attainment was also above that of similar schools and above that of mathematics and English in the school.

Attainment in GCSE science was above the national average in 2003 and 2004. All students taking biology, chemistry and physics gained A*-C grades in 2004 - this is a notable achievement. Double award science grades were also above those found nationally.

77. The attainment of students on entry is broadly average. On the basis of these test and examination results, achievement is good through Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs and the more able make good progress.
78. The work seen from the majority of students was above average for their age in Year 9 and Year 11. The quality of the work of able students was very high throughout the department. GCSE coursework was also of a good standard. The work of lower-achieving students showed some incomplete work and books that would not form useful revision notes. Teachers mark books regularly but the feedback given to students on how to improve is variable in quality. Students show above average standards of spelling in their work and the department is making use of key words in teaching. Students' mathematical skills enable them to make progress in science. Older students construct and use graphs well and can manipulate formulae; younger students demonstrate an effective grasp of basic mathematical skills.
79. Overall teaching and learning are good. Very good teaching was shown in a Year 8 lesson about insulation where the lesson started by using references to the linked school in Russia and students enjoyed wearing real Russian cold weather clothing. This was followed by experimental work on insulation; practical details were clearly established by means of very good use of questioning. Group work was well organised and students responded well, showing good practical skills. In a Year 11 lesson about electronic configuration, students' current understanding was established then clear, logical, appropriately challenging questioning was used to extend pupils' understanding of the topic before they carried out activities based on the new learning. Time was used effectively. Where teaching shows room for improvement, students are not moved through work quickly enough and insufficient time is used for consolidation of learning, both during and at the end of lessons. In some lessons, more appropriate strategies and materials to address underachievement are required. In almost all lessons, students' attitudes and behaviour are good or very good. Where student attitudes and behaviour are less good, it is as a result of weaker student management and where students are insufficiently involved in learning activities. In all lessons where support teachers are present, they make very effective contributions to students' learning.
80. Leadership of the department is very good. Standards have risen considerably since the last report. Students think highly of science as a subject. Schemes of work are now in place and the departmental database of student attainment is used well to identify underachievement. Considerable effort has been made to produce a Year 10 GCSE revision CD-ROM which has involved many pupils and staff members. Laboratories have been effectively refurbished and there is a rolling programme of textbook replacement. The department makes a significant and effective contribution to the training of new teachers and has used strategies to retain high-quality trainees on the school staff. Able students can study GCSE astronomy in extra lessons provided by the department. Enrichment revision sessions, trips and visits and BT lectures enhance the curriculum. Management of the department is very good. The department runs well; rotas and systems are in place to ensure the National Curriculum and GCSE courses are delivered and deadlines met. Recording systems are very good. There has been detailed monitoring of teaching and learning. There are good materials available to support learning for students. The use of ICT in the department is developing quickly; its use for data logging and modelling should form a more regular and integrated part of teaching and learning.
81. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good. All areas identified in the last report have been targeted and improved. Standards have risen; attainment in lessons is typically good; feedback to students has improved but still needs to be more consistent; and schemes of work are in place and form useful working documents to promote effective teaching and learning. Textbook provision has improved but there is still a need for materials

for less able students. Technical and laboratory provision has improved; the work of the technicians is exemplary.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision for information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is being well led by the new acting head of department.
- Teaching is good and teachers use a variety of techniques to make lessons interesting.
- Attitudes and behaviour are good, as most students are enthusiastic about ICT and enjoy the lessons.
- Teachers do not always ensure that the work fulfils the needs of all students.

Commentary

82. Students come into the school with ICT skills that are below average. By Year 9, their attainment is in line with the national average. The previously good exam results showed a dramatic drop in 2004 in grades A*-C, from 62 per cent to 19 per cent. However, the school has taken strong measures to address that and the present Year 11 should achieve at least a 50 per cent pass rate. Currently, in Year 11, attainment is in line with national averages.
83. Overall standards of attainment in ICT are average. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. By Year 9, students have begun to use control technology and can design a simple flowchart. They know the relevant vocabulary and actions related to spreadsheets and are able to print out a table displaying the formulae use. Most students can alter decimal places and replicate formulae, but lower-attaining students find this difficult. Higher attaining students are able to annotate their work identifying areas for improvement. Students in Year 10 have made a good start to their coursework files and are making good progress with graphics. Year 11 is responding to the extra support and very well planned work and although achievement is satisfactory, there are signs of improvement.
84. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers plan very well for the lessons, use challenging material and lessons move at a good pace, using a variety of tasks. In a very good Year 11 lesson, the teacher made very effective use of current news events to help students to understand how developments in ICT are affecting society, specifically the prevention and detection of crime. The students were very motivated and were able to give appropriate examples. Students in Year 9 were very enthusiastic about a simulation activity representing the chances of a lottery win and they were able to understand the effect of changing the variable. Where teaching is less than good, pace is slower and there is insufficient variety in the teaching material used. Some students in Year 11 are making limited progress, due to poor attitudes towards the subject. However, as a result of the new appointments in the department and very good relationships, most students in Year 11 are responding to the

opportunities for catch-up and individual support. This is also reinforced by the very good and often excellent subject knowledge of teachers, which enables all students to learn well, and often very well, in lessons. Assessment is satisfactory overall; work is marked regularly and students know their National Curriculum levels. However, students in Years 7 to 9 are not always clear about how to improve their work. Assessment is good in Year 11, where staff are regularly assessing progress to enable students to improve.

85. Leadership and management of the subject are good, with some very good aspects. The acting head of department is successfully addressing the problems of the previous year. She is a very good role model for other staff, with consistently very good teaching and excellent planning. She is clear about how to bring about improvement and has clearly identified barriers to achievement. She has good relationships with other staff and is able to mentor and advise new staff. The Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) Strategy has been thoughtfully introduced and now ensures that all areas of the curriculum, including control technology, are covered in the programme. The head of department has been auditing the subject in detail and this information has been used for action planning.
86. The subject makes good use of literacy. There are writing frames for reporting and evaluating work and key words are displayed on the walls and stressed in lessons. For example, in a very good lesson on graphics, students were able to explain words such as 'crop', 'flip', 'rotate' and 'sharpen' in the context of the subject being studied. Students are helped to skim texts to improve researching for information on the Internet.
87. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Teaching continues to be good and standards of attainment by Year 9 have improved. However, GCSE results continue to be inconsistent and, although resources have improved, there are still access and software issues, which restrict the use of ICT in other subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

88. The use of ICT in other subjects needs development. It is used well in some subjects, such as science, design and technology and religious education, and interactive whiteboards are used widely to enrich learning. There are no identified problems of staff expertise, as many have good ICT skills. For example, the head of science has produced an impressive revision DVD with multi-choice questions and examination information. ICT is used very well in business studies to research for information and present work. There are sufficient opportunities to use and apply skills in design and technology, where teacher skills are good and computer-aided design is used well. ICT is used well in physical education, where students have opportunities to record and monitor their heart rate in fitness lessons.
89. There is little evidence, however, of the use of ICT in mathematics and students do not have opportunities to use spreadsheets to construct formulae to plot graphs. In English, there are limited opportunities to plan, draft and redraft their work on screen and to use a variety of ways to present their work. Statutory requirements are not being met in music and art and design. The main reason for this is lack of access and insufficient resources. For example, in art and design there are insufficient opportunities to use and

apply skills other than the use of the Internet and the department's website. Although there are four independent suites of laptops, two suites are in constant use by the ICT department, as there are insufficient computers in each room for larger classes.

HUMANITIES

Geography

The overall provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well or very well due to consistently good teaching.
- Good leadership impacts positively on students' learning and overall standards.
- Good student engagement and use of enquiry-based work promote good learning. Fieldwork provides effective learning but needs developing outside the local area.
- Lack of access to ICT facilities and teaching aids reduce learning opportunities.

Commentary

90. Recent GCSE results have improved to be well above average. The 2004 results show boys performing as well as girls and very high against the national average. Most students meet or exceed expected levels of achievement. Students do better in geography than they did in most of their other subjects.
91. On entry to Year 7, standards are below average. By Year 9, it is broadly average. This indicates achievement is good over Years 7 to 9. Standards of work are higher in Years 7 and 8 than in Year 9, where some students, mainly boys in lower sets, are reluctant writers. By the end of Year 9, students have a good grounding in geographical skills. Most use maps competently. Graphical presentation and analyses of statistical data is very good. Students' knowledge of place is good but students have limited understanding of spatial patterns and processes. Higher-attaining students including the gifted and talented are appropriately challenged. Average attaining students make good progress but some lower-attainers are hindered by literacy difficulties. When provided with specialist support, students with special educational needs make good progress. By the end of Year 11, standards have risen to well above average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good. This is due to consistently high-quality teaching and students' very positive attitudes to learning. Some GCSE projects are of exceptionally high quality.
92. Teaching and learning are good overall with some examples of very good teaching. Management of lessons is usually very good with teachers dealing competently with challenging students. Teaching strengths include very good planning, well-structured lessons and the engagement of students in active learning using a range of teaching methods. The best lessons have good pace and productivity and high expectations with students, through enquiry work, fully involved in their own learning. However, in some lessons, students rely too much on their teachers who do too much for them. Learning could be improved if all lessons were related more carefully to previous learning and lesson aims were more precisely focused on what students should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson.

93. The subject is well led and managed. Staff work very well together as a team. Curriculum planning and assessment for learning is good. Day-to-day marking is thorough but targets for improvement are not related directly enough to the learning needs of students. Difficulty of access to computer facilities has prevented aspects of the ICT programme being implemented. Fieldwork undertaken provides very effective learning but does not give students experience of an area outside the locality, in Years 7 to 9. Resources are generally good, although there is need of an overhead projector as standard equipment in each subject room, a computer suite and a fieldwork budget. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Overall provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well due to good teaching and attitudes to learning.
- Lack of challenge, pace and productivity in Years 7 to 9, mainly due to poorly motivated students, results in underachievement.
- There are insufficient specialist teachers to fully meet curriculum requirements.
- Insufficient tasks which engage and involve students limit learning opportunities.

Commentary

94. Few students choose the subject for study at GCSE. Examination results improved in 2004 but are still well below average. Students do not do as well in history as in most other subjects. Many students perform to expected levels based on prior attainment.
95. Students enter in Year 7 with history skills that are well below average. By Year 9, standards are still well below average. There has been insufficient improvement over Years 7 to 9; achievement is therefore unsatisfactory. By Year 9, students have a basic grounding in historical skills. Most have a general understanding of the main events and people of the periods studied but few realise their significance in the overall context of study and chronological framework. Students have satisfactory practice in the use of documentary and pictorial sources but interpretive skills are weak. Higher attainers at times produce good written work but need to be stretched more in some classes. Students with special educational need progress satisfactorily when provided with specialist support. Generally, however, too often work tasks set for students are not appropriate for their differing ability needs. By Year 11 standards have improved to below average. Achievement over Years 10 and 11 is good. This is due to good teaching and students who are well motivated, work hard and want to do well. Students' interpretation of historical sources has improved noticeably but critical evaluations are not as good. GCSE course work is of good standard but there is insufficient regular testing of students and not enough emphasis on improving examination technique.
96. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; they are good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students. Relationships are generally warm and relaxed but there are some challenging classes, in middle and lower sets, which require strong management. When teaching positively engages

well-motivated students in active learning using a range of teaching methods, including modern technology, as in Years 10 and 11, learning is noticeably better. In these lessons, expectations are high and pace and productivity good. However, teachers generally have too low expectations in Years 8 and 9 and many students have low motivation and are reluctant learners. Tasks set are often not satisfactorily completed, with boys in particular proving reluctant writers. This results in underachievement. Learning is then not as satisfactory as the teaching. There is scope for more independent learning and group enquiry. Lessons are usually built on a solid information base but too often insufficient time is taken to fully place the lesson in its historical context.

97. The subject is satisfactorily led and competently managed. Strategic and curriculum planning is sound. Staff work together well but the present arrangement with only one specialist subject teacher is unsatisfactory. The ICT programme cannot be implemented due to problems of access to computer facilities. Standards and achievement were higher at the time of the previous inspection so that improvement overall has been unsatisfactory.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are broadly above average, resulting in good achievement at GCSE.
- Students of all abilities and ages are well supported by a wide range of appropriate resources in very suitable accommodation.
- A developing team of staff enjoy success in fashioning good attitudes to issues of faith in a multicultural world.

Commentary

98. At the end of Year 9, standards are broadly average, and achievement is satisfactory.
99. For Years 7 to 9, the department is still developing appropriate assessment of levels. The new Agreed Syllabus has not yet been printed. At age 16, all students take GCSE religious education either full or short course, and in 2004, 85 per cent reached grade D or above. The number reaching grade C or above was higher than for many other school subjects and broadly in line with national expectations. There was no significant gap between boys' and girls' attainment.
100. In Years 7 to 9, standards of work are average; students follow the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Year 7 students have a wide range of experience and prior attainment. They learn about the six principal religions of the United Kingdom in Year 7, and study three in depth with Christianity in Years 8 and 9. They learn to understand religious language, such as naming the features of a church. Students of all abilities write well about the beliefs of friends or family. They retell stories of founders of religions well. A variety of aids, including drama, ICT, sound and artefacts, help them to understand concepts. They can write well about feelings and express empathy, across the ability range.

101. In Years 10 and 11, most students make good progress; achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. They learn to think about topics of interest in the modern world, including peace and war, and crime and punishment. They are helped to understand and discuss issues, expressing personal opinions in small groups as well as the whole class. Students of average and above average ability can express themselves well in various types of writing, including definitions, tables and extended answers. Students with special educational needs are well supported to make progress in line with their peers. Achievement is weak for some students who attend college on at least one of the days they have religious education lessons, as a result of lack of continuity. Revision booklets help make up the work missed.
102. Teaching and learning are good. Strengths include very effective lesson plans and well-prepared resources, including video clips on the overhead interactive whiteboards in all the rooms. Staff are expert in a wide range of teaching techniques and the large majority of lessons are taught by enthusiastic specialists. Potentially disaffected students are helped by extracts from recent films to appreciate the reality of life in prison, to focus on the issues of crime and punishment from a mature and realistic angle, and develop as thoughtful citizens.
103. Leadership is good. A well-planned curriculum promotes effective learning for students. Management is good; this includes the management of behaviour and planning for examination requirements such as course work. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Assessment procedures are improving; they are a current departmental priority. Religious education contributes significantly to the moral, social and cultural aspects of personal development, and through visits, students are made aware of spirituality in Christian and Buddhist places of worship.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management has resulted in the identification of priorities for improvement, and standards in resistant materials are no longer unsatisfactory.
- Good teaching and learning overall in Years 7 to 11 are resulting in improving standards and students' good achievement.
- There are insufficient common procedures and practice between the different subject areas in design and technology.

Commentary

104. Standards of work are average by Year 9. This represents good achievement for all students, who have had very varied previous experiences. In Years 7 to 9, students are taught about different materials and processes, but get little experience in systems and control or structures. In the best work, students research their ideas extensively, plan their making well, and can record the stages of making a product using a digital camera. The quality of some students' work is unsatisfactory. This

happens where teachers' expectations are lower than they should be and work in some folders remains unfinished.

105. In 2003, GCSE results were above the national average overall. Overall, students did better than they did in any of their other subjects. There were differences in performance between subjects but no subject area was below the national average. Results in food technology and textiles were well above average. Results in 2004 indicate that standards have risen again overall. In textiles, results in 2004 fell to broadly average when only a short course was offered. Standards in resistant materials have also improved from last year and are now marginally above average. Standards in food technology are now very high. In the current work seen by, Year 11, standards are above average overall, and this represents good achievement for all groups of students. Coursework is very well organised in food and textiles, and tighter student guidelines are resulting in improvements in resistant materials. Presentation and application of ICT is less good in resistant materials. Students communicate their design ideas well in more formal drawings, but do not universally use sketching and modelling skills to show how their ideas develop. The quality of students making is above average overall.
106. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 are good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge to match the areas taught but there are gaps in the range of expertise, such as systems and control areas. In Years 7 to 9, where student workbooks have been developed has given students more time to concentrate upon designing and making and evaluating their products. There are some differences in expectations, use of terminology and assessment procedures between contributory subject areas. In Years 10 to 11, teachers use a variety of teaching methods effectively, but could incorporate product analysis and modelling opportunities more consistently. Students' work is well monitored, but teachers do not relate feedback closely enough to examination criteria. There are very good writing frames to guide students in food technology. They are not taught how to sketch a busy page of design ideas in order to make their learning more effective.
107. Leadership and management are good. There are clearly identified priorities for development and standards continue to improve. A number of areas of good practice are developing, for example, the assessment techniques used in food technology but such examples are not being applied consistently across the department. In general, assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not sufficiently matched to National Curriculum levels. The use of ICT and CAD CAM (computer-aided design and manufacture) is developing well. There is insufficient liaison with feeder schools to enable accurate assessment of standards on entry. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 needs to be reviewed to ensure better National Curriculum coverage and sufficient open-ended challenge in all subject areas. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been extended well to include graphics, and vocational options in health and social care and catering.
108. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Student progress is no longer unsatisfactory and standards in all subjects are at least average and above average overall; standards are generally rising. The decline in student performance in resistant materials has been reversed.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and standards at the end of Year 11 are high.
- Teaching and learning are good, and occasionally very good, in Years 10 and 11.
- The unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of younger boys too often interferes with the learning of their classmates.
- The most able make very good progress.
- The department is very well led but the monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistent provision.
- The difficulty accessing computers makes full delivery of the National Curriculum impossible.

Commentary

109. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were average - an improvement on the previous year. GCSE results were above average, better than 2003 and similar to those at the last inspection. The girls' results were well above average while the boys' results were average.
110. The standard work at the end of Year 9 is broadly average. Drawing is central to students' work but a significant minority have difficulty using line to accurately record what they see. Students understand the effect of perspective from Year 7 onwards.
111. Students use scrapbooks to collect information about art and artists. They do not use computers to create artwork. Students enter school with below average skills and knowledge but achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. They continue to achieve well and standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. Scrapbooks contain more imagery from magazines than is usual and whilst students' written comments are very extensive, they seldom provide any personal opinion of the imagery. Students also find it difficult to discuss their work in any critical way. Most drawing is seen as a way of making a picture but some drawing is overworked and the information the student sought is lost. Colour figured strongly in above average drawings of crumpled paper and corrugated materials. Their use of composition is good and results in good quality, ambitious two and three-dimensional mixed media works. Those who are least able make good progress in art and design because teachers have good knowledge of their students' needs and plan work accordingly. Those who are most able make very good progress by taking advantage of their teachers' good subject knowledge and around a third of all students gained the highest GCSE grades in 2003 and 2004.
112. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good. The best teaching and learning occur in Years 10 and 11 where lessons are often very good. Teachers present lessons with enthusiasm, often using their own artistic work to help students move forward. Their assessing, prompting and encouraging of students in lessons maintains a creative, busy learning atmosphere. The ends of lessons are not so well planned and opportunities for students to discuss their progress are sometimes missed. The teachers generate good attitudes and

students enjoy lessons. The setting arrangements in Years 8 and 9 result in groups of boys who misbehave and interfere with their classmates' learning. Learning was poor in a Year 8 lesson because the work lacked challenge and the management of the students' behaviour was not strong enough. In contrast, in a Year 10 class where students were developing compositions from their drawing of marbles, standards were above average and progress was good in response to the teacher's high expectations.

113. Independent learning was good when Year 11 students were challenged to experiment with colour, line and materials to respond to a condor's flight. The assessment of students' work is very good. Students are involved in evaluating their own work from Year 7. Assessment data is used to identify weaknesses in student performance and the curriculum. There are good opportunities to work with 'artists-in-residence' and visit art galleries. Students also consider how European and multicultural artists comment on faith, conflict and human emotions.
114. The department is very well led. The subject leader is ambitious for her students, subject and staff. Planning aims at raising standards yet further. The management of the department is good, although the monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistent provision. The accommodation is unsatisfactory because rooms are unsuitable for large groups; there is a shortage of storage space and an absence of office space. There is a good range of books and sufficient ICT equipment to allow small groups of students to research and develop their work. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained. Assessment and students' involvement in their own learning have improved. The use of ICT remains unsatisfactory.

Drama

Drama was not inspected in detail but some lessons were seen. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2004 were broadly average but reflect good achievement for these students.

115. The teaching of drama is an asset to the curriculum. The teaching of drama not only broadens the curriculum, but also improves standards because students are able to transfer the skills they have learned into other subject areas. Teaching and learning emphasises decision-making skills, and provides opportunities for students to think for themselves. Students learn well because they enjoy the subject and the chance to take responsibility. Emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the students. Provision is very good in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, contributing to the positive ethos of the school.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because teaching is good.
- Results at GCSE are consistently above average.
- Assessment is not sufficiently well developed in Years 7 to 9.
- Effective leadership is moving the department forward.
- Extra-curricular provision is good and involves an increasing number of students. Music contributes significantly to students' personal development.
- The music accommodation is unsatisfactory and restricts learning. There are not enough music technology resources to meet the requirements for the use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

116. Standards in Year 9, are broadly in line with national expectations. Students join the school in Year 7 with varied musical experiences and with below average attainment in music. By the end of Year 9 they make good progress because of effective teaching. Overall achievement is good. Students with special educational needs achieve well. However, higher-attaining students and the more musically able do not always make as much progress in lessons because the work is not always challenging enough for them. Students in Year 9 have good keyboard skills and they maintain their own parts well when playing with others, but their singing is less well developed.
117. GCSE results for 2004 were above the national average for grades A* - C. Most students achieved better results in music than in their other subjects. Since the previous inspection, the trend in results has been consistently well above average but the numbers have been too small to be statistically meaningful. Standards in Year 11 are above the national average. Students achieve well from Year 9, because of effective teaching and because most of them have instrumental or singing lessons, which has a positive impact on all aspects of their work. Their performing skills are good and a few students achieve excellent standards. Students show good knowledge and understanding of musical styles in their compositions and in their responses to listening to extracts of music.
118. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives which are shared with the students so they know what they are expected to learn. Varied activities which integrate theoretical aspects of music with listening and practical music activities enable students to develop their musical learning effectively. Resources are well chosen and used effectively to develop students' musical understanding, skills and knowledge. Students in Years 10 and 11 learn key musical vocabulary well because the teacher plans effectively for this, but there is not enough emphasis on learning musical vocabulary in Years 7 to 9. Effective management of students and the support provided by teachers while they are working ensures that most students concentrate and behave well.
119. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department, who has been in post for just over a year, has made a significant difference after a period of instability and has a clear sense of direction and drive for improvement. The department is well managed. A good start has been made to department evaluation and clear areas for improvement have been identified, including the use of music technology and assessment. There are not enough music technology resources to enable the

department to meet National Curriculum statutory requirements in Years 7 to 9, and to develop students' composing and performing skills further in Years 10 and 11. Students' work is assessed regularly, but in Years 7 to 9 the criteria are not sufficiently well linked to the topics studied and the work assessed is not sufficiently well balanced across the range of performing, composing and appraising activities. A good range of extra-curricular activities has been developed, including performance opportunities which develop further students' skills and musical learning and which also contribute well to their personal development. This is because of the enthusiasm of the head of department which has also resulted in more students getting involved in making music together and in more students taking GCSE music. The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory and, as a result teaching methods and students' progress is restricted. This is because there are not enough practice rooms for group work and instrumental lessons. Also, there is only one music classroom and some classes have to be taught in a non-specialist room, which affects continuity and restricts the development of musical learning through practical activity. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are strengths in teaching throughout the school and every teacher shows a very high level of commitment.
- Students achieve well in GCSE examinations.
- Extra-curricular sporting provision is very good.
- There is a high level of non-participation among some groups of boys.
- Accommodation is currently unsatisfactory.

Commentary

120. Students achieve well in examinations and last year, for the second year in succession, all achieved the pass rate. Standards are in line with the national average. The performance of girls was better than boys in 2003 whereas in 2004, the trend was reversed. There has been a steady increase over the last four years of the number of students taking the examination. Good results and increased interest in the examination are due to the hard work of teachers who encourage a knowledgeable approach to all aspects of students' practical and theoretical development. The quality of work in Year 9 indicates that students are performing well and are beginning to improve on overall average standards by the time they are ready to move into the upper school. Girls tend to perform better than boys, indicating that they have more positive attitudes to their work. Students with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Although they are expected to cover the same work as everyone else, the open-ended nature of their tasks means that they can work within their capabilities. They are therefore not disadvantaged and, as a result, make good progress. Students with particular talents are encouraged to extend their learning both in and out of school.

121. Between Years 7 and 9, standards are broadly average and indicate satisfactory achievement. Students learn from an early age the benefits of health-related fitness and are exposed to technical vocabulary from the outset. Some younger boys are so competitive that they are unable to pace themselves to run continuously for 12 minutes. Netball skills are well taught. Occasionally, students who enter the school late and having played no netball, soon develop accurate passing and marking skills. Rugby is also taught well but some students are reluctant to participate in the cold and wet conditions. Virtually all students are able to swim and understand the techniques of personal survival by the time they leave school.
122. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average, indicating good achievement. High-quality netball skills are evident in Year 11 GCSE lessons on performance analysis. Effective footwork and passing skills raise standards of play to well above average. In rugby, students have developed accurate passing and effective tackling skills. Systematic teaching of 'scrumming skills' results in the establishment of good techniques. Students' work in GCSE theory lessons shows evidence of them researching their topics, not only through reading, but by use of the Internet. End of topic tests indicate good retention of information. Technical vocabulary is used effectively and presentation of the work of some students is impressive. Very good use of ICT aids study and the presentation of work.
123. Teaching and learning are good overall. Some teaching is very good with most of the best teaching observed in Years 10 and 11. All teachers have very secure knowledge of their subject resulting in students, receiving high-quality technical information. Lessons are appropriately challenging with safety always being a prominent consideration. Relationships with students are generally strong, resulting in most students enjoying their activities and working amicably together. Behaviour is frequently well managed. However, the behaviour of boys who do not participate in activities is occasionally unsatisfactory. This has implications for safety, since the attention of teachers is often distracted from the main task of teaching other students.
124. Despite currently labouring under extreme difficulties caused by the building programme, leadership and management of the department are good. A very committed team of specialists is responsible for some outstanding achievements in many areas of sport. The school is particularly successful in inter-school, county and national competitions, and celebrates students' achievements accordingly. The extra-curricular provision is very good. Progress since the last inspection has been good, although students still do not have sufficient opportunities to plan elements of their own activities. Neither are they sufficiently encouraged to comment upon their own work and that of others. Accommodation is currently unsatisfactory, but the new sports hall will improve this position significantly.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

The provision for business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average; achievement is good overall. Students are interested and motivated by the subject.
- Teaching is good, and often very good, with very good use of practical activities to stimulate students' interest.
- There is very good use of ICT to support learning.
- The subject makes a good contribution to work-related learning.
- The department needs to ensure that the action being taken to improve GCSE results for the present Year 11 cohort is successful.

Commentary

125. GCSE results in 2004 were below average. This is a drop in the usual standard achieved; the results were a reflection of the lower ability levels of that particular group of students.
126. Standards of work seen in lessons are above average in Year 11; achievement is good overall. The strength of the students' class work is their basic understanding of the subject matter and their steady accumulation of knowledge, which is well organised in their files. Students confidently deal with business concepts and apply appropriate business terminology effectively. For example, in a Year 11 class on protecting the rights of the consumer, students showed a good understanding of the 'Sale of Goods Act' through their class discussion.
127. Teaching is good and, on occasions very good. Behaviour is managed very well and relationships with students are very good. The teacher makes the lessons interesting and the work challenging, so students want to learn and are enthusiastic about the subject. A starter activity was used very effectively in one lesson, as a variety of shoes, from walking boots to ballet shoes were demonstrated to show 'fitness for purpose'. Students particularly enjoyed investigating e-commerce on the Internet and going through the buying process while checking important details such as the returns policy. Students are encouraged to be able to work independently and to relate their learning to the world of work. The overall quality of learning is good. Assessment procedures are good and teachers have a clear understanding of students' achievement. Work is marked thoroughly with suggestions for improvement.
128. Leadership and management of business studies are good. The head of department is responsible for aspects of the school development plan related to its Business and Enterprise status. She carefully evaluates progress. Schemes of work are adjusted to suit each year group or class. For example, a double award examination at GCSE has been introduced to fit the learning needs of students more appropriately.
129. ICT is used very well in business studies. It is used constantly for presentation of work and research on the Internet. Students can insert tables into a word processing program and can copy and paste images from the Internet. Break-even charts are prepared in a spreadsheet, using the appropriate formulae. The addressing of ethical issues in such areas as marketing and world trade makes a good contribution to moral development. The department makes good use of business mentors who support students in their projects. The subject makes a good contribution to work-related

learning as it enables students to learn about the world of work through very effective partnership with businesses in the area and also of parents who are in business and are very supportive of the department.

130. Since the last inspection, GCSE results have been mostly maintained. Teaching continues to be good and very good. However, in view of the fact that the school now has achieved Business and Enterprise College status, the improvement has been good.

Health and social care

131. In health and social care, standards are above average and students achieve well because of good teaching and learning. External speakers, workplace visits and support materials support appropriate learning opportunities.

Catering

132. In the new catering course, current work seen is broadly average, and students' achievement is good. Teaching is good, and staff have appropriate previous industrial experience which ensures that good learning is relevant to a commercial situation. Deficiencies in resources in the school are dealt with by good links with a number of external agencies.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision in work-related learning (WRL) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made a strong commitment to WRL and enterprise activity within the regional 'Increased Flexibility Programme' (IFP).
- Flexible co-ordinated timetabling, and strong local and regional partnerships, have resulted in a wide range of alternative curriculum opportunities for all students.
- Learning support staff accompany students on vocational courses away from the school premises where possible, in a co-ordinated programme.
- Students' opportunities to learn about and for work vary between subjects, and there is currently no core provision for WRL.

Commentary

133. The school has recently acquired specialist business and enterprise status. As part of this continuing development, the school has a dedicated business and enterprise centre, and is fostering close relationships with the local business community. Links with industry and commerce make learning about and for work more authentic, for instance, where school projects with Unilever, Heinz and McDonalds have resulted in the development of real products. Recent training days have focused upon developing business and enterprise opportunities in the curriculum through the armed forces, agriculture and the hotel and catering industries.

134. Students learn through work in a two-week work placement in Year 10. The experience is well monitored and the school has now appointed a member of staff through its specialist status to co-ordinate and monitor this element of all students' placements and learning.
135. The school has made a strong commitment to WRL and enterprise activity. It is a leading player in the development of a number of imaginative alternative curriculum courses and partnerships. These are largely related to vocational courses within the regional IFP. Flexible curriculum pathways allow students of all abilities to take advantage of the IFP. A developing commitment to common blocked timetabling is enabling the school to offer opportunities through a number of partner schools and colleges. There is a broad range of opportunities including those in agriculture and horticulture such as the NVQ Level 1 in land-based industries, focusing on the working farm at Easton College. There are developments in BTEC applied GCSE courses. About one third of the cohort of students in each of Years 10 and 11 follow the popular vocational IFP programme. In the school, students can follow successful vocational options such as business studies and catering. Links with partners are well developed and students well monitored and supported. For instance, in a very positive feature, learning support staff will accompany students out of school where appropriate, in a programme co-ordinated by the special educational needs co-ordinator.
136. Currently, a number of subject areas, but not all, contributes well to students' WRL understanding. In English, all students prepare a business letter and keep a work experience diary. In physical education, students gain a planned insight into the commercial working of leisure centres and a sports village. In design and technology, students routinely design and make products for a specific 'market' and undertake enterprise activities. In business studies, students look in detail at business organisation in the public and private sector, linking well with parents, and numerous local businesses and industries. Business mentors regularly come into the school, share first hand experience and complement teaching. The students and school work with a number of banks, and specifically help to develop the school bank. The business studies curriculum involves planned opportunities for all aspects of WRL, and there is development in the form of the trial of a new double award. The contribution of business studies courses to learning about and for work is strong, and the number of students taking this course has risen. The school plans a future curriculum which will include a core entitlement for all in ICT and business/enterprise.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

As there was not enough teaching of citizenship during the inspection, it is not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in citizenship.

137. Citizenship is provided through different subjects and through whole-school days. This new arrangement is still in the early stages of development. English, geography, history and religious education make good contributions to citizenship. However, there is no planned, whole-school programme, clearly showing when and how citizenship is to be covered explicitly, with sufficient time allocation and depth of coverage. Because of this, the school is not meeting statutory requirements for

citizenship in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. New procedures for assessing and recording students' progress in citizenship have been developed but are not yet fully in place. The school met requirements for assessment and reporting progress to parents in 2004.

138. Since citizenship became statutory from September 2002, there have been several changes of co-ordinator which have affected implementation and the development of citizenship. The current co-ordinator has only been in post since the beginning of term but is already moving the subject forward. She has a very clear vision for the future development of the subject and a very clear understanding of the areas for development, which have already been incorporated into the development plan.
139. Citizenship was not inspected at the time of the previous inspection but progress during the last two years has been unsatisfactory. The school must now ensure that the weaknesses in provision are addressed in practice.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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