

INSPECTION REPORT

GREAT YARMOUTH (VA) HIGH SCHOOL

Great Yarmouth

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121219

Headteacher: Mr J Nixon

Lead inspector: Mr M Beale

Dates of inspection: 10-13 January 2005

Inspection number: 268391

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of students: 12 to 16
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 826

School address: Salisbury Road
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mrs L Fisher
governors:

Date of previous 28 September 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This school is over-subscribed. It has grown in size since the last inspection, although it is still smaller than other secondary schools. The school achieved specialist technology school status in September 1998. Plans to build new sections to the school have been delayed. There is a new headteacher in post from 1 January 2005. The catchment area presents many challenges, which the school is seeking to tackle through the partnerships it has established with health and social services as well as other voluntary agencies. This development has been supported by the school's involvement in one of the country's largest Education Action Zones. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average and the proportion with statements of their need is average. The more acute levels of need include students with moderate learning difficulties and with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Attainment on entry is well below average overall, with particular weaknesses in literacy. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is above the national average. Many students are from homes where their parents are employed in the seasonal holiday trade or in low wage employment. There are 11 students in the care of the local authority and this is high for a school of this size. Most students are from white-British backgrounds, although an increasing number of Portuguese children attend the school many of whom are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The school was awarded *Investors in People* status in 2003 and gained *Sportsmark* recognition in 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9708	Sylvia Daintrey	Lay inspector	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	English Special educational needs English as an additional language
32379	Bob Brewster	Team inspector	Mathematics
4126	Clive Parsons	Team inspector	Science
31685	Val Girling	Team inspector	Art and design
8501	Paul Hartwright	Team inspector	Design and technology
33015	Richard Winter	Team inspector	Geography History
8052	Ken McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. Members of staff strive with much success to meet the diverse needs of the students and their families. The school serves the community very well. It has broadened its work in recent years to involve many other agencies in supporting the students' social and academic development. Well below average attainment on entry, low levels of literacy and the social and economic disadvantages faced by many families, place considerable challenges on the school. In spite of these disadvantages, many students achieve well and make good progress during their time at the school. This is largely because of good teaching and their positive attitudes. The previous headteacher has given a clear direction to the school; however, improvement planning is not sharply focused on key priorities and school targets. The new headteacher is forming a clear vision for the next stages of development. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- students achieve well in mathematics and science, and GCSE results in both subjects almost reached the national average in 2004;
- the lessons of a significant number of teachers are consistently of good or better quality;
- in spite of action taken by the school, low standards of literacy and numeracy adversely affect students' achievement;
- the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is carefully planned to meet students' interests and aspirations, and utilises well the strong links with other institutions and the local community;
- high quality care, support and guidance is focused well on meeting individual needs, but there is insufficient focus on consistently meeting the learning needs of students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. GCSE results have risen more rapidly than nationally and the other main shortcomings have largely been tackled successfully. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. Assessment procedures are more secure and information is generally used well to support learning. There are now more effective systems for evaluating the performance of the school and monitoring the work of teaching staff. The school has taken steps to reduce absence but these have not gone far enough nor have they brought about consistent improvements in attendance.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
	E	E	D	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.*

Achievement is good overall. Year 9 test results were well below average in 2004 although this represented good achievement for many students. Current standards are well below average by Year 9 but are average in information and communication technology, music and physical education. Overall standards are below average by Year 11. The students do particularly well in Years 10 and 11 in mathematics and science. GCSE results in both subjects were close to, but just below, national averages in 2004. Current standards

are below average in both subjects as they are in English, where there has been an improvement from the well below average GCSE results in 2004. Standards are above average by Year 11 in information and communication technology, and average in art and design music and physical education. There is a widening gap in performance between girls and boys as they get older. This is largely because many girls make particularly good progress and achieve better than the boys. The achievement of the increasing number of Portuguese students varies quite considerably but is satisfactory overall. Students with special educational needs also achieve satisfactorily overall but shortcomings in their provision mean that some of them could do better.

The students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. The majority of students are keen and interested in their work, although a significant number have limited motivation and low self-esteem. Behaviour is generally good. Attendance is poor and the high level of absence of a small but significant number of students adversely affects their achievement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good as are teaching and learning. Many lessons are well planned and gain and retain the students' attention so that they learn new ideas and are interested by the work. Students collaborate well when working in pairs and small groups. New technology is used well to support learning. Teachers seek to develop literacy, but the lack of co-ordination reduces the impact of their work. There is insufficient focus on improving numeracy through subjects. The school has taken the opportunity to introduce a wide range of courses in Years 10 and 11 that cater for the students' interests and aptitudes and are planned to provide routes into further education and training after Year 11. Strong and highly effective links have been established with other schools and the local community. Much is done to support and monitor the academic and personal development of students, as well as supporting several of their families. The school is very successful at ensuring the welfare of the students. The partnership with other agencies, such as health and social services, is highly effective in helping to meet the wide range of needs of the students and their families.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The previous headteacher has skilfully steered the school over the last few years and leaves it with firm foundations on which to build further progress. He has been supported well in this by a strong and effective governing body, which ensures that all responsibilities are met. The change in headteacher is enabling governors and staff to re-evaluate the next stage in the school's development, including reshaping roles within the senior leadership team. The leadership of other key staff and the management of the school are satisfactory but hampered by the dual roles being undertaken by several staff. Planning for the school's future is not sufficiently focused on targets for raising standards.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally in support of the school, although a small but significant minority are not happy with the quality of communication. The inspection evidence does not support this view as the school provides as much if not more information than many. Students are also largely happy with the school and recognise that members of staff go out of their way to help and support them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- provide more effective co-ordination of the drive to raise standards of literacy and numeracy;
- increase the rigour and effectiveness of the procedures to reduce absence;
- ensure greater consistency in the achievement of students with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language;
- develop a strategic plan for the school's improvement, that is focused on raising standards.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall. Students make good progress from their well below average attainment on entry to the school. Year 9 test results are well below average and GCSE results are below average. Both compare better with results in similar schools. Current overall standards are well below average by Year 9 but improve to below average by Year 11. Girls make more rapid progress than boys, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of potentially high attainment achieve well and gain good GCSE results.
- Achievement is good in mathematics and science and standards rise as students move through the school.
- The achievement of a small but significant number of students is adversely affected by their poor attendance.
- Weaknesses in basic skills slow the progress and learning of many students.
- The progress of students with special educational needs or learning English as an additional language is not sufficiently rapid because support in lessons is not consistently effective.

Commentary

1. Year 9 test results improved considerably in English in 2004, but fell in mathematics and science. The fall was significant in science. This has prompted action that is starting to benefit the students' achievement. Overall results, and results in each subject, were well below the national average. However, they compared much more favourably with schools where the students had similar Year 6 test results. Mathematics results were well above average and science results were above average compared to these schools. Test results in English were in line with the average of these schools. The 2004 results represented quite reasonable and in many cases good progress for the students in mathematics and science from their standards on entry to the school. However, a significant proportion of students in Year 9 did not do as well as they were capable of in English and the improvement in this subject could have been even greater. In spite of the fall in 2004, results in mathematics in Year 9 were better than in English and science because more students met or exceeded the nationally expected Level 5 and the higher Level 6. Girls' results were better than boys in English and science, while boys did better than girls in mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.3 (27.9)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	32.3 (33.4)	35.5 (35.4)
science	29.1 (31.9)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 186 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The rising trend in GCSE results in Year 11 since 2000 has been more rapid than improvements nationally. The overall results in 2004 were below average and in line with results in similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were close to but just below the national average but were well above results in similar schools. English was the weaker of the core subjects in 2004, as it had also been in 2003. Results in English were well below average in 2004 and in line with results in similar schools. Changes in leadership of the English faculty are beginning to have an impact and there are signs that standards and achievement are starting to rise. The same cannot yet be said for modern languages where GCSE results have been consistently very low. GCSE results were also significantly below average in design and technology and history in 2004. The gap in performance widens between girls and boys at GCSE largely because girls make good progress overall, and a small number of boys do not achieve all their prior attainment indicates that they should.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	40 (38)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	82 (81)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (88)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	244.5	282.8

There were 185 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The most recent test and examination results indicate that the majority of students make good progress during their time at the school and achieve well. This was confirmed by evidence of the current achievement of students. Achievement is at least satisfactory in virtually all subjects and is good or better in many. Standards are well below average in English, mathematics, science and modern languages by Year 9. Standards improve by Year 11 although they are still below the national average. It is only in information and communication technology, music, physical education and in art and design by Year 11 that standards are in line with the national average. Attainment on entry is well below average overall. Even so, the school has a significant number of students who are capable of high standards. The organisation of these students into one class and the challenging teaching they receive enable them to do well and gain highly creditable results at GCSE in many subjects.
4. Standards of literacy and numeracy are low for many students on their entry to the school. This severely affects their subsequent achievement. The school has not tackled this weakness sufficiently consistently across all subjects and the standard of their work suffers as a result. There is potential for even better progress for many students with a more concerted approach to the development of these skills. By contrast, the students have plenty of opportunity to develop and apply their skills in information and communication technology throughout the school. As a result, competence is above average by Year 11.
5. The achievement of many students is adversely affected by their poor attendance. Several also have personal and family difficulties that generally emerge during Year 10 and 11 and can lead to them not gaining the GCSE results and achieving the standards of which they are capable. The school's analysis of GCSE data shows that these two factors contribute most to students not achieving their personal targets. Changes to the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 designed to meet the interests and

aptitudes of the students have yet to feed through into examination results. However, there are clear indications that the courses motivate the students well and that they have a positive effect on their attitudes in other subjects.

6. Students who are not fully fluent in English make satisfactory progress. Generally they do not all make the same good progress as other students because there is limited support both in class and in small groups once the students can manage or move into Year 10. On entry to the school, students are assessed rather informally but helpfully on their level of English. Thereafter there seem to be no further specific records available of their progress in English. When there are major concerns, these students may be tested and receive help from the literacy programmes and their progress is recorded and available.
7. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, although variable. The combination of effective setting and very well adapted teaching in English and mathematics helps students achieve very well. Most students are effectively helped by the addition of lessons in literacy in Years 8 and 9 so that they can read and write well enough to cope with their courses in Years 10 and 11. Students, some of whom have statements of special needs, who improve their reading and writing substantially, are not given any more specialised teaching. The provision for these students is unsatisfactory. About half the students identified with special educational needs have urgent emotional, behavioural and social needs, but many also have learning needs such as for reading. There is a wide range of programmes in The Lodge to help them, but these do not always focus on the learning needs. Consequently, progress in learning is slower than improvement in their other needs.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes and behaviour are good. Students' personal development is satisfactory: it is good for their moral and social development and satisfactory for their spiritual and cultural development. Punctuality is satisfactory. Attendance is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' positive attitudes in lessons and their ability to work collaboratively make a significant contribution to their good achievement.
- Most students behave well because rewards and sanctions are applied consistently and there are effective arrangements for supporting those with challenging behaviour.
- Despite the improvements in monitoring and in the following up of absences, the students' attendance remains well below the national average.

Commentary

8. Students' attitudes and behaviour remain at the good levels reported at the last inspection. Their progress in lessons is considerably enhanced by their willingness to learn, based on the good respect they show for the staff teaching them. For example, in a very effective drama lesson, Year 8 higher attaining students responded very well to the graduate trainee teacher, who was taking their class for the first time, and they maintained high levels of interest and concentration throughout. Similarly in Year 10, a mixed ability class of girls, including two learning English as an additional language, were highly motivated when working with a part-time but very experienced teacher because their course in health and social care is very well organised to meet their

academic and vocational aspirations. Students overall are positive about their experiences at the school and value the help they receive which enables them to do as well as they can. Nevertheless, a small number of students lose interest in school and learning by Year 10, due to a mixture of difficult social circumstances outside school and their lack of confidence in having the necessary reading and writing skills.

9. The school has successfully created a calm, orderly and harmonious environment in which students can learn and develop together. Behaviour and relationships in most lessons, assemblies, and at breaks and lunch times were good throughout the inspection. Students clearly understand the whole-school discipline structure and are well motivated by the rewards system. The well-organised range of sanctions, which include removal from class and internal exclusion where appropriate, is effective in enabling lessons to proceed with little disruption, as well as identifying students who need extra support. Those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties make good progress in improving their behaviour because the wide range of support programmes are effective in giving them the help they need. The vocationally-orientated alternative curriculum motivates a considerable number of disaffected students in Years 10 and 11. The school is successful in establishing a climate where bullying and harassment are not tolerated, with the result that these are not significant issues for students and they are confident that incidents are dealt with effectively. The number of exclusions rose considerably after the last inspection but has fallen back to the levels reported six years ago. There was a slightly disproportionate number of students from a white European background excluded last year, but no students from an ethnic minority background were excluded in the autumn term 2004.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	777	73	2
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	26	4	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0

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

10. Attendance was a key issue for action at the last inspection, yet attendance rates fell over the three years from 2000 to 2003 to reach a very low level compared with the national average by May 2003. In September 2003, a part-time attendance officer was appointed and his work, together with that of an administrative assistant, resulted in an improvement in attendance by two percentage points in the last year. There has

been a further improvement so far this school year but overall attendance remains below the 90 per cent benchmark with a significant amount of absence in Year 10. Students' absences affect the standards they can reach in their GCSE examinations. The school has identified a small number of families where there is a history of non-attendance but the partnership between the school and the Education Welfare Service has not worked sufficiently well to break the cycle. Not all parents, including some from the Portuguese community, ensure that their children attend as regularly as possible. The school's registration systems are not as rigorous as they could be to secure completely reliable data about students' attendance at lessons and other educational activities throughout the school day. Attendance is not identified as an issue in the school development plan. There are no clear targets to raise attendance and there is no senior manager in charge of co-ordinating a whole-school drive to improve attendance levels. Most students arrive in time for the start of the school day and are generally punctual for lessons.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.6	School data	1.6
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

- Students' moral and social development continues to be a major strength. For example, students treat people and equipment with respect, responding well to the role models provided by staff who represent a range of ethnic backgrounds. Students of all abilities and backgrounds work well together on activities ranging from group work in mathematics and science to performing in school productions and playing in sports teams. Older students have good opportunities to take responsibility, such as reception duties in Year 10 and prefects in Year 11. Several Year 11 students show high levels of leadership and enterprise, such as when developing the school council into a more effective student voice and representing the school in community initiatives. The headteacher has rightly identified the need for students to develop greater independence. Students develop a satisfactory level of spiritual awareness and appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions. However, these areas of personal development are not planned for through specific activities in subjects and opportunities are missed to promote them further in assemblies and displays.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good, and has received much successful attention since the last inspection. A particularly strong feature is the range of extended services now provided to meet the wide range of needs of students and their parents. Strong and effective links have also been established with other local schools and colleges that significantly enhance the students' achievement and develops their interests. A large proportion of lessons are well taught and the curriculum has been adapted constructively to meet the aspirations of students from Year 10 upwards. High levels of care, support and guidance are provided that support well the students' personal and social development.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Assessment procedures have improved and are now good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are carefully structured and benefit from the teachers' adoption of the national strategy to improve teaching and learning.
- New technology is used well to support teaching and learning.
- Teachers promote the development of literacy, but not in a co-ordinated way across the school; there is insufficient development of numeracy skills other than by mathematics teachers.
- Withdrawal sessions are effective for supporting students with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language, but developing their learning is not a consistent focus in all lessons.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 94 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	23 (24%)	44 (47%)	21 (22%)	4 (4%)	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. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and a significant number of teachers regularly provide lessons of good or better quality. One of the major reasons for the improvement in the performance of teachers has been the adoption of the structures and principles of the *Key Stage 3 National Strategy*. This has provided a secure framework to support lesson planning. It also gives a sharp focus to lessons and to the students' learning. Teachers have to work hard to maintain the working environment that they have successfully created in their classrooms and most use the school's strategy for managing the students' behaviour well. Lessons are mostly challenging and interesting and are planned to meet the variety of students' needs. However, where teaching is less successful, lack of student motivation is not tackled effectively and they achieve very little. At other times, while most students work adequately and make some progress the behaviour of a minority and the inability of the teacher to deal with this results in inadequate learning. The organisational arrangement of placing the highest attaining students into one class in each year group is used very well by teachers to challenge and extend their learning. This is the major factor in enabling these students to achieve well and gain good GCSE results.
13. Inventive starter activities are used by many teachers to consolidate previous learning and focus the students' mind on what is to come next. The best lessons develop learning in small steps based on clear objectives that are shared with the students and returned to at the end of the lesson to evaluate progress. Teachers adopt a wide variety of methods to retain the students' attention and interest. This also helps to generate pace to learning. The result of this is that the students generally concentrate hard and support each other's learning well when working in pairs and small groups. The variety of methods used includes some highly effective use of new technology to enhance teaching and to make learning more interesting. Interactive whiteboards are used well and teachers plan to enable students to develop and apply their information and communication technology skills in virtually all subjects.

14. Teachers are less successful in promoting other key skills. Although many subjects seek to improve the students' reading and writing skills this is rather piecemeal and not suitably co-ordinated across subjects. Consequently, some of the valuable work that is being undertaken is not having the overall impact that it might. The specific needs of individual students are not clearly identified unless they are recognised as having special educational needs. However, almost a half of the students have not reached the standards expected of them on entry to the school. This lack of co-ordination and identification of need holds back learning in several subjects. There is not a concerted and co-ordinated attempt to improve the students' numeracy, which also has the same weaknesses on entry to the school.
15. There are insufficient teaching assistants available to support students with statements of special educational needs. Although the teaching assistants permanently assigned to the English and modern language faculties also give support, it is difficult to provide sufficient cover and even more difficult to provide for those without statements. The teaching assistants support students very well and indeed several have become trained teachers or taken on wider roles as in the English faculty. Developing the learning of students with special educational needs is also not consistently a focus in all lessons, as teachers are not always sufficiently clear about what their specific learning needs might be. In addition to the effective specialist help available to a few students learning English as an additional language once a week, there is a part-time translator who links parents to teachers and also supports in some lessons. However, while this helps to ensure that students understand what to do in lessons this is not focused sufficiently on helping them to learn. Further informal help and assistance is provided by a volunteer but again there is less help with learning. A further shortcoming is that subject teachers do not always have a sufficiently clear picture of the learning needs of students learning English as an additional language. Consequently, their lessons are not consistently planned to improve their language skills.
16. Overall, the assessment of students' work is good and improvement in its use has been good since the last inspection. There is a whole-school system in place that is thorough and constructive and supports learning well in very many subjects. The marking scheme relates to students' targets and clearly identifies underachievement. Assessment is used very well in subjects such as English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology and music to inform planning and to ensure students understand how to improve. The use of assessment is unsatisfactory in citizenship.

The curriculum

The breadth of curricular opportunities is good and there are good opportunities for enrichment. Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school develops its curriculum well and is particularly good at meeting the needs of students in Years 10 and 11, but provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- Students receive good guidance and support when making choices about courses of study.
- Links with the college of further education promote a good range of vocational courses.

- The wide range of enrichment activities helps to raise the aspirations of the great majority of students.
- Weaknesses remain in the development of students' reading and writing skills and provision for students with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

17. In keeping with its status as a technology college, the school requires all students to take a technology subject in every year. In addition to this, the school makes a very flexible and wide-ranging set of opportunities available in Years 10 and 11. These are designed to respond to students' wishes, make the most of the skills possessed by staff and, most importantly, to meet the learning and career needs of all. Currently, in addition to the core of essential subjects, the school offers ASDAN and sports leadership awards, applied GCSE courses in several subjects including engineering, and it has plans to introduce a range of BTec courses. Limited time is allocated for teaching both citizenship and religious education so that neither subject is taught in sufficient depth.
18. The breadth of the curriculum is accompanied by good advice to students on options and future pathways. Lessons designed to raise aspirations are an integral part of the personal, social and religious education curriculum. The school is successful in ensuring a good mix of both boys and girls in almost all subject areas. Recruitment of staff is not easy, but only in design and technology and in history are there insufficient qualified teachers at the moment. The school has a good record of developing teachers itself through the graduate teacher programme and of making links with teacher training colleges to aid recruitment. The provision of support staff is satisfactory overall even though there are not sufficient to meet consistently the needs of all students with special educational needs. The school's accommodation is satisfactory, except in terms of practice rooms in music; resources are also satisfactory.
19. By itself, the school would not be able to provide as much as it does. Very good links with the local college of further education and another local high school mean that students are offered courses in catering, building related studies, hairdressing and automotive studies, along with vocational courses in subjects such as art, engineering and information and communication technology. Students who take a course at the college can rely on obtaining a place there to continue their studies beyond the age of sixteen. In order to broaden choice, members of staff at the school also take all students in Year 11 on visits to other colleges when they have their open days.
20. Many opportunities are available to students outside the compulsory curriculum. Participation in extra-curricular sport is good, with a range of games and sports offered in order to cater for most interests. The school puts on a musical and artistic production every year and organises a rich programme of visitors and speakers in connection with the personal, social and religious education course. This includes excursions for students and the recent programme has involved opportunities for small numbers of students to visit London and Brussels. Most subject areas offer enhancement classes to students in Year 11 to assist with their preparation for examinations.
21. A priority for the school is to attend to the needs of students who require support with the development of literacy. Many arrive in Year 8 without the necessary skills to gain access to the secondary curriculum and, as yet, there is insufficient drive to promote

this. Provision in Years 8 and 9 is not fully meeting the learning needs of students with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language. Provision for both of these groups of students is also unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. All students with special educational needs have individual educational plans and these are known and referred to by teachers. In some cases, the targets refer only to behaviour and offer little guidance to inexperienced or temporary teachers. In Years 10 and 11, the main provision for students with special educational needs is within the alternative curriculum. This offers good opportunities, mainly vocational. However, there is little evidence that this is thoroughly discussed with parents in the transition reviews, and decisions taken in Years 8 and 9 affect what may be done later.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for students' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Provision of support, advice and guidance is very good. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is acutely aware of children in need of protection and its liaison with social services and the police is excellent.
- Most students benefit from very effective academic targets and guidance which help them achieve the levels and grades of which they are capable.
- Students have access to high levels of support designed to help them overcome personal and social difficulties which are barriers to their learning, but these are not as focused on raising standards of literacy as they could be, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

22. There has been a tremendous improvement in the school's arrangements to care for its most vulnerable students. The designated person for child protection is very highly trained and experienced in dealing with young people at various levels of risk including those on the child protection register. She ensures that all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities. She also monitors the needs and progress of students in public care very closely, working extremely effectively with carers and other agencies to provide very effective support. The school is at the heart of pioneering work of national importance, driven by the local Education Action Zone, to bring various agencies closer together when dealing with children at different stages of need. There is a particularly strong link with social services and the police child protection team; for example, social workers come into the school to draw up initial assessments alongside teachers.
23. The school places a very strong emphasis on ensuring that all students are safe and their well-being has the highest priority. A considerable number of staff members are trained in first aid and very good records of incidents are kept and monitored. The health and safety co-ordinator is very experienced in his role and all the proper procedures are in place. The site is secure and well maintained to minimise hazards. Breaks and lunch times are well supervised. Students know what to do if they are worried about bullying. They have good access to confidential advice on health-related issues from a range of professionals who come into school one lunch-time a week.

24. There are very good arrangements to prepare Year 7 students for transfer to the high school with the result that the new students settle quickly and make good progress. Academic support is based very effectively on the termly monitoring of students' attainment against their predicted levels at the end of Year 9 and grades at the end of Year 11. Most students are clear about what they have to do to improve and value the support they get from their teachers. The most able students are very successfully challenged and extended through the setting arrangements. Students on the borderline of grades C/D at GCSE are identified and targeted for extra study support. Guidance about the opportunities available to students when they leave school is good.
25. Since the last inspection, the school has considerably developed its already helpful support and guidance systems to meet even better the complex needs of many of its students and their families. There is now a wide range of support and educational programmes run both by the team of staff with non-teaching backgrounds based at 'The Lodge' and external agencies such as the youth and community service. These programmes achieve notable successes in raising individual students' levels of self-esteem and confidence, keeping them within mainstream schooling, and enabling them to gain some qualifications such as the Prince's Trust award. They contribute significantly to the school's effective inclusion of students who come from very troubled backgrounds and disrupted education.
26. A weakness of the support and educational programmes, however, is that they do not target the improvement of students' basic skills as much as they could, especially for older students. The result is that students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory, rather than good, progress. Most students with special educational needs for learning difficulties are effectively helped by the addition of lessons in literacy in Years 8 and 9 so that they can read and write well enough to cope with their Year 10 and 11 courses. However, there is no specialised teaching of reading and writing in Years 10 and 11 for those who need it, including some who have statements of their special educational needs and others who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This has the potential to lead to disaffection when students' reading and writing skills are too low to give them confidence that they can complete their courses successfully. A few students at an early stage of learning English as an additional language benefit from effective specialist help once a week; others in Years 8 and 9 receive formal support in the literacy programmes and informal assistance with understanding what to do in lessons. There is limited support once the students have gained some fluency or move into Year 10.
27. Students are confident that their opinions are valued. Their views are surveyed from time to time, both about general school issues and also about specific matters such as bullying and the provision of the drop-in health advice session. They are starting to be involved in assessing their own progress, for example in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school council is raising its profile under the leadership of the current executive committee of older students and is becoming better known as a vehicle which students can use to have an influence on school life.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good. Links with the community, other schools and colleges are very good. The school provides very good extended services.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works very effectively with many external agencies to provide a wide range of support programmes which meet the needs of students and their families.
- The school's links with other schools, colleges and the community significantly enhance the range of experiences available to students.
- Parents are provided with good information about the school and their children's progress but in spite of this their involvement in their children's education is limited.

Commentary

28. The school is developing very successfully as an extended school, providing a support service to the local community throughout the year including school holidays. To achieve this it has put in place multi-agency projects and established a wide network of partners with whom it works closely. These include social services, youth services, health services and the police. Students benefit greatly from this provision which includes an off-site alternative education programme for those at risk of exclusion, mentoring, confidential advice and support on health-related issues, and a summer holiday scheme. Parents are able to drop in to the school's support centre 'The Lodge' where they can access individual support or parenting classes. The small number of parents seen during the inspection spoke very warmly in praise of the support they and their children have received which has successfully improved the lives of their families and the life chances of the students. Parents from the Portuguese community also appreciate being able to come to The Lodge, meet each other and find out how their children are doing with the help of a bilingual support worker. One agency with which the school does not have such a close working relationship is the Education Welfare Service. This has had a detrimental effect on efforts to improve students' attendance levels.
29. The school liaises very effectively with its feeder middle schools to ensure a smooth transition to Year 8, including for those students with special educational needs. Some of this work is carried out under its specialist school remit which means that technology and mathematics teachers are able to spend time in feeder schools contributing to lessons and preparing the students for their time in the high school. Year 7 students from one of the feeder schools are temporarily based at the high school which makes their transition even easier. The school's very good links with its local community enhance provision in art, music, history, citizenship and assemblies. They also enable individuals and groups of students, ranging from the least to the most able, to gain very worthwhile experiences in improving the local environment and contributing to democratic processes and decision-making. Very good links with colleges and workplace settings enable students to have a wide range of opportunities to develop their work-related learning and vocational education. There are good partnerships to plan post-16 pathways. The school works very effectively with a high school in a nearby town to share aspects of provision, staffing and training; for example, boys and girls from Great Yarmouth High have the chance to study automotive engineering, and members of staff are able to share problems and ideas with fellow professionals. The school is also fully involved in its local cluster of schools for planning, strategy and curriculum projects. The site is very well used for community activities and adult education.
30. Although parents' response to consultations is low, they generally express positive views about the school. They receive a good range of information, much of which is

posted home. It includes a very interesting and attractive termly newspaper and a report on their child's progress each term. A recent innovation is the provision of homework booklets for each subject which enables parents to see what their child is doing for each half termly topic. Translation facilities are easily accessible. The school tries to overcome the reluctance of many parents to get involved in their children's education but does not always succeed. Parents are not sufficiently involved in the decisions taken in Year 9 about what courses students with special educational needs will take in Years 10 and 11.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Governance is good as is the headteacher's leadership. The leadership of other key staff is satisfactory, as are management procedures.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The previous headteacher's leadership and the leadership of the current headteacher have both provided a clear direction for the school's improvement and have been instrumental in securing its progress in recent and present years.
- The school has a strong and largely successful commitment to supporting students of all backgrounds.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the main issues it faces.
- Data is used increasingly to evaluate the effectiveness of the school, but there is scope for greater rigour in monitoring the work of staff and planning for improvements in provision.
- Strategic planning and annual development planning are neither sufficiently focused on key priorities nor underpinned by school targets.

Commentary

31. Under the previous headteacher's leadership, the drive for raising standards by improving teaching and learning has been skilfully promoted alongside the broadening of the services offered and a strengthening of the support framework for students and their families. The new headteacher has already begun to articulate his vision for the next stage of the school's development based firmly on ensuring highly effective education and services through more rigorous procedures to ensure quality. The action taken since the last inspection to raise standards and student achievement has been successful and the school plays an important role in the life and development of the local community. The senior leadership team is also going through a period of transition. Members of the team have dual roles which need to be reviewed if the new headteacher's view of their whole-school leadership role is to be fulfilled. The leadership skills of other key managers vary, but the action taken within English is already judged to be having a significant impact on raising the quality of teaching and learning and the students' achievement.
32. The school's aim to meet the complex needs of its students is manifested in several ways. For example, the action taken in recent years in providing a wide range of services and in seeking flexible courses for students in Years 10 and 11 have proved to be highly effective. A policy to ensure race equality is in place and suitably monitored. Many students come from quite difficult backgrounds and have complex

educational and social needs. The school strives very successfully to meet and support particularly their social and emotional needs. However, there is scope for greater focus on the learning needs of some students. The overall leadership and management of the support faculty are very good and have been a major influence on the progress and development since the last inspection. Management structures have changed considerably to accommodate the range of services offered, although there is scope for them to provide a greater focus on student learning. For example, the special educational needs co-ordinator is shared with another school. All of the administrative work is completed systematically and skilful deployment of support staff has resulted in at least some provision for students with statements. However, the current arrangement limits the leadership role, particularly the informal liaison with faculties. Similarly, the pastoral aspect to the support for students learning English as an additional language is very well provided but there is less emphasis on managing the progress of their learning.

33. Key governors play a crucial role in the school. The committee structure has recently been revised and provides a more efficient and effective structure for its work. Governors have supported well the development of the school in recent years. They have a very good understanding of the difficulties it faces, its strengths and the action needed to secure further improvement. They also recognise that this is a key moment with the change in headteacher and the decision not to proceed with the planned building programme to reconsider the future direction of the school. Financial planning is used effectively to support the school's main priorities. The extra funding that has been sought through the various initiatives that the school is involved in has been used very effectively to meet the main priorities for development.
34. There have been improvements in the management systems adopted to monitor the work of staff and evaluate the effectiveness of the school since the last inspection. However, there is the potential for further improvement here. The school has accumulated much data that it uses well to help identify its successes and where further improvements are needed. This data is analysed by both gender and ethnicity. It has been used particularly effectively to identify disaffection and underachievement amongst students with the result that various programmes have been introduced to meet their interests and aspirations. However, this data is not used as effectively to underpin the specific priorities in the school improvement plan to raise standards in basic skills or to provide measurable targets to gauge success. The lack of measurable targets is making it difficult for the school to accurately evaluate the extent of improvements. The management of teacher performance and the review of the work of faculties have improved but remain inconsistent in their effect. For example, there is limited systematic monitoring of the impact of recent developments in basic skills.
35. The improvements to leadership and management since the last inspection have served the school well and have been instrumental in helping to secure the progress and development made over this period. The school has firm foundations from which to build for the future. However, further developments of management processes are needed if the new headteacher's aims for the school are to be achieved.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,302,165	Balance from previous year	174,125

Total expenditure	3,338,874
Expenditure per student	4,286

Balance carried forward to the next	137,416
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WORK RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careers guidance and work experience are managed well and they make a good contribution to students' knowledge and understanding.
- Vocational courses and work-based learning are a very strong element for a good proportion of students in Years 10 and 11.
- Students have many opportunities to develop their skills for employability, although these are not yet sufficiently planned across different subjects to provide a systematic framework.

Commentary

36. There are many examples of subjects providing opportunities for students to develop their skills for enterprise and employability, including working as part of a team, collecting relevant evidence and making decisions in science for example. There are also examples of work being used as a context for learning, such as in a Year 8 drama lessons. However, these are not planned and co-ordinated across the school sufficiently so they do not build systematically and progressively. In addition, students themselves do not always recognise these skills as those for employability. Specific activities, such as industry days, do make a much more explicit contribution to skill development, as well as providing students with direct experience of the way that businesses work and the range of employment opportunities. The school has developed a good range of effective partnerships to support this activity.
37. The effective systems and framework for careers detailed in the previous report have been maintained and provide students with direct access to people from a range of employment sectors, as well as access to impartial advice and guidance. Students value the advice and guidance that they have received. During the inspection, Year 9 students were observed being introduced effectively to the local Connexions provision, as well as starting to research the careers database in preparation for making informed option choices. Preparation for and debriefing from the well managed work experience programme ensures that students use the experience to extend their understanding of work.
38. A high proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 study vocational courses, with effective links with other schools and the local college enabling a good number and range to be offered successfully. The school has also developed a good range of additional work-based and work-related provision to meet the needs of a wide range of students. These programmes are managed well, with good partnerships developing for the benefit of students. Leadership and management of work related learning is secure overall, but there has been insufficient focus on developing and co-ordinating the contribution of other subjects.

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

- Very strong leadership by the head of department has succeeded in creating an effective ethos for learning.
- Examination results are well below average at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching is good and students make good progress.
- Students enter Year 8 with poor literacy skills.
- Assessment data is very well used both to track individual progress and explain how to improve.
- Achievement is good but standards remain well below average at the end of Year 9 and below average by Year 11.
- The low standards in English impact adversely on students' use of literacy in other subjects.

Commentary

39. Year 9 test results improved in 2004 and reversed the downward trend over the previous three years. Results were still well below average, although they were in line with results in similar schools. Students do not reach the same levels in English as they do in mathematics and science. GCSE results in English were well below average in 2004, although there was some improvement particularly by the boys. In English literature, results were also well below average, and the boys' results were very low indeed. Students do not do as well in English as in their other subjects. This is very marked in the boys' literature results. Some high attaining students obtain A* and A grades. In the work and lessons seen, attainment was not quite so far below expectations. The department is now fully staffed and the curriculum has been completely remodelled. Teachers now focus more closely on learning and how to improve attainment.
40. Generally, students on entry to Year 8 have poor reading and writing skills. A substantial proportion of the students are more than two years behind their chronological age in reading and are unable to write more than a few lines. Students often express themselves in a lively manner but very informally and colloquially. Though this gradually improves, many cannot adapt their language to formal situations. Listening skills are variable, depending on the situation and interest. Their comprehension skills are limited because their vocabulary is narrow. They read little for their own enjoyment. However, most enjoy the study of Macbeth. The weakest area is writing because students' handwriting is an effort for them and spelling and punctuation a struggle. Many use simple sentence structures only and drop into colloquial English frequently. There is marked improvement by the end of Year 9. By using the '*point, evidence and explain*' method, many develop their ideas. Students organise their ideas and their presentation is careful, despite some poor handwriting.

In Year 10 lessons, students showed real interest and curiosity, which led them to make perceptive comments. In Year 11 written work, almost all students can write at much greater length and more effectively than in earlier years. Word processing enhances presentation considerably and this was very noticeable in the folders of students on the Work Skills course.

41. The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are very good features. The most successful lessons have a well-defined starter, requiring participation. This prepares students well for a further task and does not simply merge into the lesson. In the low attaining sets, lessons are very effectively broken down into small linked activities that reinforce each other – the result of good planning. In all lessons, there are high expectations and challenge. Teachers help students improve by marking work very carefully and explaining how they can do better. The best work folders show good progression towards their targets. All teachers use assessment data available to track students against their potential. In all lessons, there is constant emphasis on improving literacy by widening vocabulary, allowing students to explain orally before writing. Students with special educational needs receive good support from teachers and when available from the teaching assistants. Students who are just beginning to learn English receive good support from teachers which aids their learning, but have little specialist support from which some would benefit.
42. The head of faculty, in post for two terms, has a very clear understanding of the needs of the department and has the drive to carry out priorities. He has succeeded in creating a committed and enthusiastic team of teachers and assistants. However, because this is relatively recent and because the examination results have not yet improved enough, improvement is unsatisfactory since the last inspection. However, there are strong indications in lessons and work that standards are rising.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43. Students enter Year 8 with very weak literacy. A large proportion of the students are unable to read independently and their vocabulary is very limited. Many find it very difficult to write more than two or three sentences. Though they are able to explain ideas or comment on issues or work quite confidently, the language is often very informal or colloquial. The school knows that this constrains attainment in all subjects but has not appointed a co-ordinator. There does not appear to be any current literacy policy. Faculties are aware of the problem and work hard to overcome it but in isolation from what others may be doing. Hence overall, standards in literacy across the curriculum are low even though they do improve by Year 11.
44. Many teachers encourage students to give sustained oral answers so they can develop ideas. Year 8 students read and answered well in a courtroom role-play in a citizenship lesson and made good progress. Students do not always listen well; unfamiliar words are ignored. Teachers often ask the students to repeat instructions and this is helpful. All departments teach key words systematically making sure they are understood and used. This helps students to read with greater understanding but many, particularly in Years 8 and 9, have only a general grasp of the meaning of longer complex sentences. Again teachers do much to help students understand by making sure they read regularly. Geography also promotes the use of the glossary and selection skills. The library has a good selection of popular fiction but even authors such as Jacqueline Wilson are rarely borrowed. The library arranges competitions, posters and book boxes to encourage reading but with relatively little success. Writing is the weakest skill of all. Many students do not have fluent

handwriting though exercise books in many subjects are well presented. Most do not understand how to develop their ideas, though the use of point, evidence and explanation is successful in some subjects. Because much spoken language is informal, writing is often inaccurate in its use of punctuation and spelling. By the end of Year 11, students can often explain well but cannot write their ideas down, particularly under timed conditions. In almost all subjects, including more practical ones such as art and physical education, these weaknesses in literacy are holding students back. Standards of literacy have not improved since the last inspection.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards remain well below average.
- The faculty handbook contains satisfactory guidance, but teachers do not put it into practice consistently enough.
- The use of new technology is a major strength and has the potential, with other innovations, to improve achievement.

Commentary

45. GCSE examination results in 2004 were very low, with boys' and girls' results a long way below the national averages. Both boys and girls gained much worse results in French than they did in the average for all their other subjects. Performance in 2004 was lower than in 2003; the teachers' assessments in 2004 show that the standards in Year 9 were well below the national average. Standards seen in lessons during the inspection are slightly higher in Years 10 and 11, but still below average and they are well below average in Years 8 and 9. However, this represents satisfactory achievement in all age groups. Most students usually work to capacity in lessons, but examples of low achievement occur, due to lack of motivation and interest. Boys and girls achieve equally well, although sometimes boys apply themselves better than girls. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others because they receive good support from a classroom assistant, who is proficient in the subject. Conversely, some more able students achieve less well than they should because lessons provide them with insufficient challenge. Attainment has fallen since the last inspection and improvement is unsatisfactory.
46. The head of faculty, appointed at the start of the previous school year, has started to combat the negative image the subject had acquired. The thorough faculty handbook opens with a good set of aims. Several new developments, including the use of information and communication technology and the decision to offer Spanish and German alongside French, have the potential to improve achievement. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The head of faculty monitors the work of the department and analyses information on achievement thoroughly in order to show where improvement is required. However, practice is inconsistent and the principles that underpin good teaching are not modelled successfully enough or put into practice consistently enough to make an impact on standards.
47. Some teachers use computers effectively to demonstrate language structures and sustain students' interest in lessons. The department has compiled a long list of useful web-sites which promote language learning. Students use spreadsheets and desktop publishing to present the results of their work. These developments have not yet made an impact on results. Learning and teaching are satisfactory overall, with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers make frequent reference to National Curriculum levels in order to show students how they can improve their standards and marking is helpful and thorough. Students usually focus on the tasks they are given; teachers provide a variety of activities and sequence activities skilfully. It is rare for teachers to adjust the difficulty of activities to meet different learning needs within

lessons and opportunities for students to hear and use the foreign language are infrequent. Few students understand the grammatical framework well enough to make good progress with their language skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are very good when compared to those of similar schools.
- Very good teaching by an experienced team successfully aims to develop the students' mathematical understanding.
- Very good student attitudes in class aid learning.
- Assessment is very well used to plan for students' needs.
- The benefits possible through the effective use of teaching assistants are not being realised.
- The use of numeracy across the curriculum is not sufficiently well promoted.

Commentary

48. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Examination results have been improved. Higher ability students are achieving well. Achievement is good in both key stages and very good overall. Standards in the Year 9 tests have improved at a faster rate than nationally but remain well below average. Students perform very well when compared to similar schools. Although results in GCSE remain below average overall, they were not far below and there was a good increase between 2003 and 2004 when the boys' results were close to their national figure. The percentages gaining the highest grades indicate that the most able students are being suitably challenged. Boys are performing better than girls in both key stages.
49. Work seen was of a higher standard than the examination performance, although standards remain well below average by Year 9 and below average by Year 11. Books contained good quantities of well-presented work at a good level of challenge. The lowest ability students in Year 9 were beginning algebra while the most able Year 9 could find the formula for a quadratic sequence. Those in Year 11 could deal accurately with the higher-level GCSE topics of sine rule and transformation of functions. Given the low level of attainment on entry this represents a good achievement in each key stage.
50. Teaching is good in Years 8 and 9, very good in Years 10 and 11, and very good overall. Teachers have high expectations of the students; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Very good class control and relationships in lessons aided learning. Well-considered steps are taken to promote understanding of mathematical processes. Some good use is made of new technology to aid learning, but this is inconsistent. Lessons are well planned to provide a variety of activities to which the students respond well. Their attitudes and approach to learning have improved since the last inspection. These factors all contribute to very good learning.
51. The faculty makes a conscious effort to develop students' language skills. The meaning and the spelling of new words are made clear. Their use is encouraged and students' understanding tested in classroom activities. This is providing help for students learning English as an additional language to gain an understanding of technical vocabulary. For most lessons poor language skills are not hindering progress. However, weaknesses in writing skills of the least able students, poses difficulties when completing written coursework.

52. Assessment is very well used to set targets and inform action. A more detailed analysis of available data could provide useful guidance in work to raise further the achievement of girls. Teachers are fully aware of individual student's special needs. Within setted groups they work to ensure that such students made the progress of their peers but this work lacked the support that strong links with special needs staff can bring.
53. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of faculty has a clear commitment to raising standards, shared by the team and supported by action. The strength of his teaching makes him a very good role model. An effective approach to the problems of staff recruitment is being made. A very strong team of teachers has been created. Members of the team are very supportive of each other so new teachers settle in very easily. Lesson observations, with feedback, and reviews of students' work ensure that the work of the department is well monitored. However, development planning relies on a one year rolling programme. This limits opportunities for the effective use of resources that a detailed three-year plan would bring.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. Mathematical competence is well below average in Years 8 and 9 and is below average in Years 10 and 11. Apart from sessions of training to illustrate current techniques with basic numeracy operations, steps are not being taken to develop mathematical skills as a planned whole-school issue. In those subjects heavily dependent on the use of mathematics such as science, teachers do take time to ensure that students can deal with the particular skills that may be required. Also lower ability students in art and design do need help with their measuring and scaling. In other subjects including modern foreign languages and geography, the students' information and communication technology capabilities are such that they are an aid to reducing any effect a weakness in mathematical competence may have. While curriculum areas are taking their own steps to ensure access to their curriculum this is of limited effectiveness compared to a whole-school drive to raise the standards of mathematical competence.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in all years and achieve well because most lessons are taught effectively and students learn at a good rate.
- The great majority of students behave sensibly, engage willingly in lessons and work well, both in groups and on their own.
- The subject is led well, with clear direction and effective systems and routines that bring a consistency to students' learning.

Commentary

55. The results of the Year 9 tests in 2004 dropped from those of 2003 and were well below those achieved nationally. Nevertheless they remained above the results of

other schools where students had a similar prior attainment in Year 6. Improvement in results had been at a quicker rate than nationally up to 2003. Conversely, GCSE results improved in 2004, with students doing better in science than in the average of their other subjects, boys significantly so. Results were below the national average, but not far below and certainly well above those in schools where students had achieved similar results in Year 9 tests two years earlier. There have been differences in the results of boys and girls from year to year, but with no specific pattern, so that overall boys and girls do equally well. Students make good progress throughout the school and achieve well in all year groups. However, standards are well below average by Year 9 and below average by Year 11. Some students demonstrate a more secure knowledge and understanding in their response to verbal questions than they do to written ones.

56. Lessons are planned well, with clear learning intentions which are explained to students, and activities which have been chosen carefully to support the intended learning. Lessons are structured well, with teachers consistently drawing out ideas and explanations from the students. Many opportunities are provided for students to review and consolidate their ideas and apply them to new contexts so that they develop steadily and securely. A good variety of activities are also used, so that individual students are able to learn in ways that work well for them. Lessons are designed for learning and the good focus on language and application supports students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language especially well. Good learning is built upon positive relationships. However, sometimes a small number of students do present their teachers with a level of challenge that they are not yet sufficiently skilled to manage with the result that teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in the occasional lesson. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Higher-attaining students are especially keen to ask questions and to seek answers to a wide range of issues related to the topics being studied. Sometimes teachers have to be very skilled to maintain this interest and good progress in developing the core elements of the lesson.
57. The assessment of what students know, understand and can do is good and being strengthened further by greater involvement of students in evaluating their own progress. There is a strong and coherent framework for the subject so that the successes of individual lessons also build steadily and progressively into secure learning for a whole topic of work. The tightness to the organisation ensures a good consistency in the expectations and general approach of teachers. There is effective use of data to identify strengths and weaknesses. This has led to systematic and satisfactory improvement, especially of teaching and learning, and sustained standards since the previous inspection. Leadership and management of the subject are effective.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students follow a GCSE course from Year 9 and receive their full entitlement to an information and communication technology curriculum.
- The leadership and management of information and communication technology provision are good.

- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, although students do not always have opportunities to be involved in whole-class teaching activities particularly in Years 8 and 9.
- In view of the high level of resources, teachers should be able to avoid the need for students to share computers in a minority of examination classes.

Commentary

58. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The most recent GNVQ examination results showed a good improvement over the previous year. The percentage of students gaining distinctions was above average. The overall pass rate was below average although most students gained accreditation in some aspects of the course. The results represent good achievement for the candidates. Work seen in lessons and in samples of work in Years 8 and 9 indicate a wide range of ability and aptitude. Standards by the end of Year 9, where students have already started their GCSE course, are generally in line with the national average. Achievement is at least satisfactory and often good. In Years 10 and 11, students are increasingly confident in using a wide range of applications. Standards seen are above average overall, which represents good achievement for most students. The majority of students feel confident about their ability to make progress and their skills are well used in other subjects.
59. Teaching and learning in Years 8 and 9 are satisfactory overall. Some lessons are taught by non-specialists and there is some variation in the approach to the scheme of work but all necessary applications are covered. The GCSE course starts in Year 9, adding more focus and challenge to the work. Students spend more time developing their skills for specific audiences. The promotion of literacy skills is a positive feature of most lessons; however, the use of the spelling and grammar checker was not consistent in all classes and does not always complement other work undertaken to develop the students' literacy. Monitoring and assessment of students' work becomes more rigorous in Year 9, to ensure that examination requirements are covered in appropriate breadth and depth. For example, the challenging work in one Year 9 class focused upon the need for data protection legislation and how it is applied.
60. In Years 10 and 11, where lessons are taught by specialists, teaching and learning are good overall and some very good lessons were observed. Courses and individual lessons are well planned to improve students' knowledge and challenging activities ensure that students are in a good position to attain the higher levels at GCSE. Teachers are keen to ensure that students develop a sense of the audience for their work and there is continued emphasis, in all lessons, upon further development of literacy skills. An increasing emphasis is placed upon business applications as the course progresses. The work includes a unit on the impact of new technology on society, which necessitates the careful consideration of health and social issues. These kinds of issues are dealt with particularly well in the upper ability groups where students rise to the challenge of the demanding standards which are set by teachers across the whole range of software applications. The most able students are highly motivated and co-operate very well when tasks require group work.
61. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The improvement in motivation and standards is the result of good management. There is a strong teaching team which in turn is backed up by good technical support and a better than average level of resources. However, because of inappropriate room allocation, several students in one group had to share computers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is good. Students have many opportunities to use and develop their skills and knowledge in all subjects with the exception of design and technology. Competency in the use of information and communication technology is satisfactory by Year 9 and good by Year 11. The curriculum is audited regularly and statutory requirements are met. The required applications are covered by all students who have timetabled information and communication technology lessons in all years. This enables subject departments to use the students' skills rather than having to teach them. This allows more time for subject-specific work. The number of computers is above average for a school of this size, which generally enables subject departments to plan use on a regular basis; some departments benefit considerably from their own suites of machines. The use of information and communication technology is good in the majority of subjects, although there is potential for much more use in music. The use of computers and other new technology equipment is unsatisfactory in design and technology.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lower and higher-attaining students do not achieve as well as they might.
- Teaching methods are imaginative resulting in interested and engaged students.
- The subject makes good contributions to the development of skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.
- Results in recent GCSE examinations were well below average.

Commentary

63. Overall, the standard of students' work is well below national averages by the end of Years 9 and 11. Results at GCSE were well below national averages in 2004 and below results obtained in other school subjects. There was a sharp fall in the proportion of students who gained an A*-C grade compared to 2003 and this represented unsatisfactory progress for the students. This is partly explained by staff absence, timetabling problems and difficulties over the moderation of coursework which the school was not able to resolve with the examination board.
64. Current achievement in Years 10 and 11 is better and is satisfactory. Where Year 10 students were seen using computer software, they were interested and absorbed in their work and learning to select and use information from a variety of sources appropriately. Students achieve well in Years 8 and 9 as a result of good teaching and learning. Although standards recorded by teachers at the end of Year 9 were well below national averages in 2004, performance was in line with school averages. Students with special educational needs achieve well in the lower sets where numbers are small and teaching is experienced and tailored to meet their needs. This is because teachers have a good understanding of the steps students need to take in their learning. Teachers ensure that all students understand key words and very carefully explain tasks to students. In higher sets, students with identified special educational needs are supported well by teachers in lessons but lack of help written into the resources limits their achievement. The achievement of the most able students is just satisfactory but could be better if teachers provided more challenging tasks. Instead, the same resource sheets are used for students with a wide range of abilities and attainment levels.
65. Overall teaching and learning are good across the age range. Teachers' questioning technique is good and challenging because they demand more detailed explanations when students give an answer that is too simple. However, sometimes teachers tend to answer questions from a student when they might have asked someone else in the group to demonstrate their knowledge by answering the question. Good contributions to literacy are seen in lessons. Students are nominated to read aloud. This ensures that all students follow the text well. They willingly ask for meanings of words they do not understand. Students are encouraged to use glossaries to check definitions. Students are also encouraged to use their imagination to write newspaper articles for display. The students are interested and engaged and make rapid progress in their understanding.

66. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory because there is now a greater concentration on improving basic geographical skills, such as the interpretation of maps and understanding of latitude and longitude. Good examples of the use of new technology include use of data from the school's computerised weather station. This enables the students to analyse statistics and produce and interpret graphs in order to write weather forecasts. In Years 10 and 11, students produce good quality coursework using computers effectively, further developing their numeracy skills by drawing complex graphs. Attitudes are good and the students concentrate well. Relationships between teachers and students are positive across the whole age range. Students willingly answer questions and offer to participate. Work is marked regularly. Assessment is thorough and constructive and used to respond to individual needs. Assessment tasks are constantly refined to ensure greater accuracy. Individual targets are clearly stated in folders and therefore students understand how they can improve.
67. Leadership is good because of effective teamwork and high aspirations for improvement by key staff. Management is satisfactory because although there is adequate monitoring and evaluation of work, self review is at an early stage of development. Targets are prioritised which are to improve results and to encourage more students to choose to follow the GCSE course.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is insufficient emphasis on preparation for the GCSE examination.
- Teachers prepare lessons to suit a wide variety of learning styles, but learning resources do not meet the diverse needs of students.
- The subject makes good contributions to literacy and information and communication technology.

Commentary

68. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because results have deteriorated from being one of the best performing subjects. Standards in GCSE examinations were well below national averages in 2004 and lower than 2003 when achievement was satisfactory. Achievement was unsatisfactory in 2004 because students' performance was relatively weak compared to results obtained in their other school subjects. The school's explanation of the poor results is that a small number of girls did not make an effort and that coursework marks were depressed because of prolonged staff absence. Students were given the opportunity to attend revision sessions on Saturdays but too few borderline candidates took up the opportunity.
69. Standards of work seen on the inspection are below average overall by Year 9 and Year 11. There is satisfactory teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 because students are enabled to develop their basic historical skills by selecting and recording information from a variety of sources as a preparatory exercise for more extended pieces of writing. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is now satisfactory.
70. Teacher assessments show that standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well below national averages. However, achievement is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9

despite many of the lessons at the time of the inspection being taught by non subject-specialist supply staff. Achievement in lessons is satisfactory due to satisfactory teaching and learning across the age range. Active student involvement in learning is also promoted; for example, challenging tasks enable groups of students to use historical sources to prepare presentations to give to the class. These lessons do provide a challenge for most; however, the best response to these activities comes from self-motivated students, whereas others merely copy information. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs are held back in some of the sets because they are all given the same resources to use when they would benefit from the provision of more key words, clues or structure to the resources. However, the most able students do not always achieve all that they might. Some extension tasks are provided but not in all units of work. In group tasks they are not able to benefit from the provision of more challenging resources to interpret, so their work lacks the detail required for the attainment of higher levels. Where tasks are more open-ended, higher attaining students do achieve well.

71. Assessment is thorough, used to respond to individual needs and informs students whether they are underachieving or not. Good contributions to literacy are made through imaginative writing. In Year 9 for example, this is achieved in the study of working conditions in 19th century mills. There are good contributions to numeracy shown in their work on measuring time. Information and communication technology is well developed, such as poster work on the Luddites and newspaper reports and graphs on 19th century child labour. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory when students are not sufficiently introduced to a task or theme before undertaking group work. Students are then not sufficiently enthused in the subject matter because opportunities are lost to engage their interest. Even though lesson resources are well-prepared and aimed at producing active learning, students are not very adept at making the best use of them and tend to copy information without really understanding its overall relevance. Weaker students spend time in mundane activities such as producing headings and colouring while others lack motivation because they are not sufficiently tuned in to the task. However, in other lessons, students are better prepared for group tasks because teachers encourage them to read out sections from information sheets to highlight key points and raise interest by providing modern day contexts to enable students to relate to past events better. Students welcome opportunities to get involved in discussion which also raises their enthusiasm. Lesson summaries are often insufficiently strong to help students consolidate their learning.
72. Management is unsatisfactory because insufficient attention is paid to preparation such as practicing past examination papers, even though this is recognised as a priority and because there is insufficient evaluation of test and examination data. Leadership is satisfactory because the leadership is keen to take on new initiatives such as adapting lessons to cater for a wider variety of learning styles, for example, visual learners are given opportunities to produce annotated sketches and mind maps.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The low time allocation means that it is impossible to cover the requirements of the Agreed syllabus to sufficient depth.
- The students are encouraged to apply their knowledge to everyday situations.

- There is a range of activities to enhance the curriculum.

Commentary

73. Religious education is taught as a combined subject with personal, social and health education, careers and citizenship. The low time allocation to the religious education element means that the Agreed syllabus cannot be covered in sufficient depth. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well below average, although the actual quality of the work that is covered is better than that. A small number of students took the short course GCSE in 2004 and results were well below average. The standards in the core course are also well below the expectations of the Agreed syllabus. Both of these courses are affected by the low time allocation. Those taking the examination course have extra lessons in their own time but still do not have the recommended time. Students enter the school with very low literacy levels and these continue to affect their work in religious education. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to the time for the courses and what could be expected from the students. Higher-attaining students do slightly better than the other students, but there is no difference between girls and boys.
74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The good relationships between teachers and the students and firm discipline promote a secure environment for learning and make a contribution to the progress and learning in lessons. In all years, the students are encouraged to apply their knowledge to everyday situations; this is stronger when considering Christianity than other world religions. Interesting lesson starter activities stimulate students' thinking. However, there is an emphasis on covering as much material as possible in the shortest time; this limits the range of teaching styles that are used. The teachers know the students well and give good individual support; however, work is not always suited to the individual needs of some students and then the pace of the lesson slackens due to the amount of individual support that is required. The marking of books is variable. There is good attention to developing the students' literacy skills but there is little use of constructive comments that enable students to understand their current level of work and what is needed to raise that level. This means that students do not have a clear lesson-by-lesson guide as to how they can improve their work and comments that are made are not always followed up. The use of new technology supports teaching and learning. The visits arranged for students and the events such as the mobile interactive classroom visiting the school stimulate interest in the subject, give good support to the curriculum and are appreciated by the students.
75. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the department and a vision for the development and improvement of the subject. The department is making the best use of the time available; however, the aspect that has allowed the low allocation of curriculum time is unsatisfactory and there is currently no formal monitoring of staff. The time allocation has actually worsened since the time of the last inspection in that lessons are shorter and citizenship has been incorporated into the course. This means that improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is well managed and assessment and management of data is very efficient.
- Teaching and student achievement are good, although the number of qualified staff is unsatisfactory and affects achievement in some areas.
- The breadth of the curriculum provides well for both boys and girls.
- The size of some classes gives rise to health and safety concerns.
- The provision of information and communication technology and modern technology is inadequate.

Commentary

76. All students take a technology course in Years 10 and 11 as well as in Years 7 to 9. Attainment on entry is well below average overall, but by the end of Year 9 students have developed their skills and knowledge so that these are below average in resistant materials but near average in food, graphics and textiles. Overall standards are below average by Year 11. GCSE results for 2004 show that students' results in graphics were in line with the national average. Textiles and food technology were below average in the same year. Resistant materials and engineering were well below average and results overall are rather lower than those reported at the time of the last inspection. There is no significant pattern in the difference between boys and girls results over the past two years. Achievement over the last two years is generally good in textiles, graphics and food technology. It is satisfactory in resistant materials but unsatisfactory in engineering. The engineering option takes place in school and at the local technology college where additional equipment and expertise is available.
77. Teaching is generally good in each year group. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, although the shortage of teachers in some of the subject areas affects learning and overall achievement. Learning closely follows teaching and is therefore also good but it is sometimes restricted by the large size of the classes. Lesson planning is good but the increased use of new technology could give greater efficiency. The established teachers have a wide range of skills and use these to encourage and challenge students to create innovative products. Wood, metal, textiles and food are used extensively, but there is less use of plastics and very little electronics. There is an appropriate balance of written and practical work. Teachers maintain good control so that observed behaviour was good. Some lessons would benefit from a more decisive beginning, middle and end. Two technicians provide valuable expertise and often help students directly. One of these is particularly skilled in metal work and engineering. Many of the technology rooms need refurbishment and access to them presents some difficulties.
78. Thorough assessment takes place at the end of each four-week module in Years 8 and 9. This includes grading of punctuality, participation in lessons, and the meeting of deadlines as well as well as effort and achievement. National Curriculum grades are used and comments are written. The data is passed on to an assessment manager who identifies performance patterns in the achievement of individual students. The data is used to provide formative feedback, information for parents and possible evidence for curriculum modification. Assessment is therefore very effective.

79. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. The leadership of the department is good and encourages effective teamwork. Documentation is comprehensive and the curriculum is well audited to show how national requirements are met in the various subject areas. Assessment and monitoring of teaching performance are strengths of the department. Consideration of moral values is an important aspect of teaching and learning. Further opportunities could be identified to increase awareness of such issues in each subject area as designs are discussed. The department provides a comprehensive range of subjects which adequately caters for the interests of both boys and girls. Resources are satisfactory overall but there are serious deficiencies in the provision of modern information and communication technology equipment which has not been significantly upgraded since the last inspection. Computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing machines are available but have not been successfully connected to the school network. Hence, they are considerably underused.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good specialist knowledge.
- Students achieve well because teachers make it clear to them how to improve their work.
- The use of computer technology supports learning well; however, the quality of written work is not high enough.
- The knowledge and understanding about art is less developed in some students than their technical skills.

Commentary

80. In 2004 by the end of Year 9 students were working at a level below that expected nationally according to teacher assessments. These standards were reflected in the work seen during the inspection. This represents good achievement as students arrive in the school working at a level well below that expected nationally.
81. At the time of the last inspection GCSE results were significantly below the national average. They continued to be well below average until 2004 when they rose dramatically to be in line with the national average. The new subject leader has led and managed the subject well with a clear vision of the steps necessary to raise standards. This has included alterations to courses offered in response to the needs of students, particularly boys, and an improvement in teaching overall. As a result, both boys and girls achieved much better than expected. Because of these factors improvement since the last inspection is good.
82. According to work seen during the inspection, students in Year 9 are working below the level expected nationally and students in Year 11 are working broadly in line with national averages. Higher-attaining students in Year 11 draw sensitively, working well from observation. Work is generally stronger when it is informed by observation of objects directly or has been inspired by a visit to a gallery, museum or interesting

place. Knowledge and understanding about the work of famous artists and the links with their own artwork are not as well developed as students' technical skills. Making notes about artists work in sketchbooks is undertaken but is generally weak and strategies are required to improve standards of writing. Students in Year 11 are offered opportunities to do extra work at clubs after school and at lunchtime. Visits and clubs make a valuable contribution to students' social development.

83. All students, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, learn well as a result of good teaching that has much better pace encouraging greater productivity than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and use practical demonstrations and other visual resources very well, including an interactive whiteboard, to ensure all students understand. Assessment is used very well to inform students how to improve their work and allows teachers to plan in order to respond to students' needs. Some further refinement is necessary to ensure that there is sufficient challenge provided for higher-attaining students. Learning about artists and craftspeople both here and abroad improves students' cultural development and the vibrant displays of artwork share this with the rest of the school and enhance the school environment.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department's vision has led to the creation of a practical curriculum that offers challenging but enjoyable learning for a large majority of students.
- The good use of assessment and revised curriculum are helping to raise standards.
- Students make the most of free instrumental tuition and the opportunities to participate in a growing number of extra-curricular activities.
- The music curriculum is restricted because of the shortage of computers and students' learning is limited by new technology not being integrated into every day lessons.

Commentary

84. The 2004 teachers' assessments show that by the end of Year 9, attainment was below average. The proportion of students attaining A*-C grades in the GCSE examination was also below average. This was due to irregular attendance by some of the boys which adversely distorted the otherwise good marks achieved by the girls. A large majority of students achieved results which were higher than their predicted grades. As attainment on entry is well below average, both these results represent good achievement.
85. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 9 are in line with expectations, representing very good achievement. However, there are not enough opportunities to work with new technology. This is having an adverse impact in all years on the achievement of many of the musically less able students. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also in line with expectations, representing very good achievement in these particular year groups compared to their attainment on entry. These results are in keeping with the steady improvement which has been taking place over the past three years.
86. Teaching and learning are good in Years 8 and 9. Students rise to the challenges of the practical nature of the course assisted by the teachers' clear explanations of the tasks. Lessons consist of a suitably varied range of activities which have been chosen to enable students to develop their skills in an environment that is conducive to work. Students with special educational needs consequently make good progress and are often the most willing to demonstrate the results of completed tasks. However, more specific planning is required to give the higher-attaining students more realistic challenge. Students' learning is also enhanced by teachers' good lesson planning, and appropriate choice of time for the completion of tasks. Good relationships exist between teachers and students which contribute towards the students desire to achieve to the best of their ability and their enjoyment of the activities. Some contribution is made to the school's attempts to improve students' literary abilities in the form of paragraphs on researched topics and student-devised sentences about the learning content of each lesson. There is not enough use of musical vocabulary or opportunities created for students to express themselves orally.
87. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11. The students achieved well in the Year 10 lesson observed, because the teacher concentrated on ensuring that the wide range of prior attainment in the group was built upon. A group of higher-attaining students were challenged well and supported each other effectively while the teacher focused attention on the less able students. The results of work scrutiny point toward an improvement in Year 11 on 2004 standards as a result of good teaching and learning.
88. The leadership and management of the subject are good and have led to good improvement since the last inspection. Although no issues were raised at the last inspection both the curriculum and assessment have been thoroughly revised. Use of assessment to respond to students' individual needs is very good. Accommodation is satisfactory although the lack of practice rooms hinders group work and the main classrooms are becoming cramped with the increase in size of classes. Resources are unsatisfactory. There are not enough computers to enable the department to teach aspects of the National Curriculum to sufficient depth in Years 8 and 9; this is having a knock on effect on the skills of students starting the GCSE course. Acoustic instruments are limited in number and quality. An increasing number of students are

taking up instrumental tuition which the school provides free of charge. Students participate readily in the growing number of extra-curricular activities and concerts given in and outside the school.

Drama

89. The subject was sampled. Results in GCSE drama are among the better ones and are close to average. All students obtain a grade. However, there is no Year 10 class this year as it was not a popular option choice. There is no Year 9 drama and this may affect choices. In the Year 8 lesson seen the quality of teaching and learning was very good. Students are interested, work well together and are developing their ability to evaluate their work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and students' positive attitudes.
- GCSE students perform relatively better in physical education than in their other subjects.
- The very good range of extra-curricular clubs and teams are enthusiastically taken up by students.
- Curriculum time for core lessons for Year 11 students is unsatisfactory.
- There is no dedicated classroom for teaching GCSE theory lessons.

Commentary

90. Students enter the school with attainment levels below and sometimes well below the level expected nationally. However, a combination of good teaching and learning, the students' positive attitudes and high expectations of participation ensure that they achieve well and reach the average standards by Year 9. GCSE results show similar good achievement with results now consistently at or just above the national average. Current students are attaining at the same overall level, but also performing better at the practical skills than the theory aspects of the course. For example, Year 10 students demonstrate good swimming technique but their theory work, whilst clearly presented, is not extensive. The department has produced some excellent theory course booklets to support students' learning.
91. Teaching and learning are good with a team of full-time specialists teaching well prepared and well structured lessons. The students make good progress in lessons as a result of the teachers' clear instructions and teaching points and excellent relationships with students. These were seen to good effect in a Year 9 football lesson where students improved their passing and control skills. Similarly, students gained an excellent understanding of the types and relevance of exercise in a very good Year 10 lesson on health related fitness. One shortcoming is that learning outcomes are not always made explicit and formulated appropriately for use in the planning, teaching and evaluation of lessons. Student progress is monitored thoroughly and the department have reworded the National Curriculum levels into

student-friendly language to inform their understanding of what level they are at and what they need to do to improve.

92. There has been good progress since the last inspection as a result of effective leadership and management. The head of department sets high expectations in terms of participation and performance, promoting teamwork among the specialist teachers and effectively evaluating their and the department's performance. Whilst there is a drive to develop the department further, for instance by developing new courses and assessment procedures, the development plan does not have sufficiently challenging or explicit success criteria for its implementation and evaluation. The department is in the process of reviewing its policies and schemes of work to embed important cross-curricular themes such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology into teaching. The use of new technology is underdeveloped.
93. The curriculum is sufficiently balanced in terms of the activities offered but there is insufficient core lesson time in Year 11 where students only receive one 50-minute period per week. In addition, where other cohorts have a single 50-minute period for games there is insufficient time to produce a fully structured lesson to assist with skills development. This lack of appropriate time is compounded by the use of off-site fields. However, the very good range of extra-curricular activities and teams are enthusiastically taken up by both boys and girls and the school has gained success at both regional and county level, particularly in cross-country and football. The introduction of the Sports Leader Award into Year 10 has given many students the opportunity to develop their personal skills. Whilst accommodation and resources are good, including a large sports hall, gym and swimming pool, there is no dedicated PE classroom to provide an appropriate learning environment for students' GCSE theory work.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

94. A very good Year 10 lesson was seen in **health and social care** in which the wide range of abilities were well supported as the students made very good progress in gaining vocational knowledge. The course is closely linked to the students' work experience placements. The teacher was well organised and knew the material well. The class responded with great enthusiasm and commitment. Standards were average, but rising rapidly because of the high quality of the teaching.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

95. The school provides a combined course in personal, social and health education, religious education and citizenship. This arrangement just about ensures that statutory requirements are met, but does not enable teaching and learning of key topics to be undertaken to any great depth.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide variety of activity takes place and the school has established good links with several external agencies.

- The school has not developed systems for the assessment of standards.
- The obligation to report attainment at the end of Year 9 was not met last year, but steps have been taken to remedy this situation.
- The school cannot show for certain that all students receive the full curriculum.

Commentary

96. Citizenship was not reported on at the last inspection, so no judgement is made on subject improvement. The school provides students with a variety of opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills of the National Curriculum programmes of study and to acquire the positive and caring attitudes associated with being a good citizen. Students cover the programmes of study in three ways. Most occurs in personal, social and religious education lessons. Some is included in English, history, geography and creative arts lessons. Other parts are covered when students take part in visits, excursions, special events in school and when they become involved in the running of the school council. The school has been particularly successful in establishing links with the community, including governmental organisations and the police, all of which improve students' opportunities.
97. The weakness is that the school has not developed procedures for judging whether students meet national expectations. The school did not report on standards or progress to parents of students completing Year 9 in 2004, the first year in which it was statutorily required to do so. However, this has been dealt with for the current year. Work and lessons seen during the inspection in Year 9 indicate that standards are well below average but that achievement is satisfactory. However, this is based on a very small sample and there is too little evidence to judge standards and achievement accurately. Some good achievement was seen in a lesson where students were required to read a play without preparation. They performed well and engaged successfully with the play's content. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers develop good relationships with students and present materials in a way which attracts and sustains students' interest. They respond in a sensitive way to students' work, with guidance and encouragement and all marking is complete and up to date.
98. The school has carried out a survey to discover which subject areas and activities contribute to the knowledge and skills of the syllabus. However, no assessments are gathered from these areas and activities. Furthermore, some of the skills, like those of participation and responsible action, are under-represented, and the school has not indicated how it plans to amplify them. The school has a vision of what a good citizen is like, but there is no clear vision of how citizenship will be developed as a National Curriculum subject. The lack of assessment systems means that the school cannot monitor performance within the subject area. Consequently the school has made insufficient progress with the introduction of this subject and leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
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
Students' achievement	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	6
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well students learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
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	4
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).