

# INSPECTION REPORT

## LEA MANOR HIGH SCHOOL

Luton

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109709

Head teacher: Lesley Cooper

Lead inspector: Grace Marriott  
Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2004

Inspection number: 268409  
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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### **Terms used in this report**

#### *Key Stages*

*Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at Key Stage 3. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at Key Stage 4 of their education. In Key Stage 3 students take courses in all the subjects of the national curriculum and in citizenship and religious education. In Key Stage 4 all students continue to study English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, physical education, citizenship and religious education. They select other subjects from the academic and vocational courses which the school provides.*

#### *National tests and examinations*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) or the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).*

#### *Standards and achievement*

*Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their work and results with national results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The judgements on students' achievements indicate how much progress students have made and whether they are doing as well as they could. In this report, similar schools are those whose students achieved similar standards at the end of each key stage.*

#### *Provision in subjects*

*The judgement inspectors make about the provision in each subject takes into account students' standard of work, their achievements, the quality of teaching and learning, leadership and management and whether statutory requirements are being met.*

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1074
School address:	Northwell Drive Luton Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU3 3TL
Telephone number:	01582 652600
Fax number:	01582 652601
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Lincoln James
Date of previous inspection:	November 2002

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Lea Manor High School is a comprehensive school with just under 1100 students aged 11 to 16. It is situated on the north side of Luton and draws most of its students from the nearby Marsh Farm Estate. Many students come from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds. Just under twenty percent of students are entitled to free school meals which is above the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is also above the national average. The main needs are emotional and behavioural, moderate learning difficulties, speech difficulties and physical disabilities. Around a fifth of students come from ethnic minorities which is above average, though relatively few students are at an early stage of learning English. The school shares a site with the Lea Manor Recreation Centre and adult education facilities. The school operates an extended day, with provision on site for child care before and after school. It also works in partnership with the Marsh Farm Community Trust and has close links with Barnfield College for the provision of vocational courses for which it has received national recognition. Students join the school with below average standards overall, but with well below average writing skills.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3674	Grace Marriott	Lead inspector	Work related learning
32670	Graham Saltmarsh	Lay inspector	
33604	Elizabeth Skelton	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language
33018	Angela Read	Team inspector	Mathematics
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Science, GNVQ science
32590	Roger Fenwick	Team inspector	Design technology, Information and communication technology
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design
18663	Philip Burchell	Team inspector	History and Geography
31682	Anne Marie Storey	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages, Citizenship
11746	Robin Coulthard	Team inspector	Music and Religious education
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education, Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Lea Manor is an improving school** which is providing its students with a satisfactory education. Standards are rising, though still below average. Achievement is satisfactory given the students' starting point. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some significant strengths. Leadership and management are good overall, and are focusing strongly on raising achievement. Students are very committed to the success of the school and, like their parents, believe that the school has improved. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- GCSE results have improved considerably
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and relationships are very good
- The head teacher and senior team provide very effective leadership
- Good developments in assessment are not being implemented consistently enough to raise standards, and work is not always well enough matched to students' needs
- Worthwhile homework is not being set consistently
- ICT provision, though better, is not yet good enough
- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is providing very good opportunities for all students
- Very good community links help to improve the quality of education for all students

All the issues raised in the last inspection report are being dealt with systematically and **the school has made good progress** in improving the quality of education. Results have improved and the quality of teaching is better, with significantly more good teaching. The development of the vocational courses has improved the curriculum. Assessment information is being used better in some departments, but it is not yet consistent enough. The assessment working group has identified clear and sensible priorities. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is better because it is now taught in Years 7 to 9, but it is not being used enough in subjects.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003	Year 2003
	E	E	E	E

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average

Similar schools are those whose students achieved similar results at the end of Year 9.

**Students' achievements are satisfactory.** They join the school with below average standards, overall, and well below average standards in writing. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is improving and is now broadly satisfactory, with good achievement in mathematics, physical education and religious education. The improving standards are reflected in better 2004 national Year 9 tests results in mathematics and science where standards are closer to average, though not yet in English where the results were still well below average. Current standards are average in mathematics and science and below average in English. GCSE results, which have been well below average, also improved considerably in 2004 and are now much closer to the national figures for students achieving 5 A\* to C grades, though still below average. The achievement in the current Year 10 and 11 classes is also satisfactory. Though standards are still below average in several subjects, there is less under-achievement. In science, geography, history, physical education (PE) and the vocational courses achievement is good and it is very good in religious education (RE). Achievement is

unsatisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT), mainly because it is not being used enough in all subjects and because of previous staffing difficulties.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted well.** The provision for moral, social and cultural development is particularly good and spiritual development is satisfactory. The vast majority of students have good attitudes to learning, and behave well in lessons and around the school. Relationships are very good. Attendance is improving and is now close to the national average, though there is still too much unauthorised absence.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory.**

**Teaching and learning are satisfactory**, overall, with some strengths in most subjects and generally good teaching in mathematics, humanities, modern languages and PE. Assessment is not consistent enough, both within and between subjects, to ensure higher standards. The good curriculum is promoting higher standards and better achievement. Vocational education in Years 10 and 11 and the extra-curricular provision are particularly good in meeting the needs of all students. They are helping to motivate students of all abilities and from all backgrounds, and ethnic groups. The school makes very good provision for the care of its students. They are consulted and involved very fully in the work of the school. Academic monitoring is satisfactory and improving. The partnership with parents is good. Community links are very good and contribute very strongly to the improvement of the school and the achievement of the students.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good.** The head teacher provides very good leadership and she is very well supported by the leadership team. They have high aspirations for all students and are determined to continue to improve the quality of education the school offers. The work of the governors is satisfactory. They are also keen to see the school improve and are becoming more involved in strategic planning and monitoring.

## **PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Students are proud of their school. They think it provides good opportunities for them and they feel valued and encouraged to achieve to the best of their ability. In general, parents are generally positive and supportive and think the school has improved.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

Building on the work done in recent years, to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards further, the most important things the school should do are

- Implement the agreed expectations for assessment, marking and target setting consistently in all subjects so that students are clear about their targets and how to improve their work, and work is better matched to their needs
- Make sure that worthwhile homework is set consistently
- Use ICT more systematically and effectively across the curriculum

and to meet statutory requirements

- Provide a daily act of collective worship

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is improving and is now satisfactory overall. Standards are average in mathematics and science, though still below average in English. Achievement is also satisfactory, though slightly better, in Years 10 and 11 with good achievement in more subjects and in the vocational areas. Standards are below average in English, mathematics and science.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results were very much improved in 2004
- Standards are above average and achievement is very good in religious education in Years 10 and 11
- In Years 7 to 9, students achieve well in mathematics, physical education and religious education
- In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well in science, geography, history, physical education, music and vocational courses
- GNVQ science students achieve well in ICT but overall achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory
- Mathematics results in Year 9 national tests have improved and are now close to the national average

#### **Commentary**

##### **Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9)**

1. The results of the Year 9 tests in 2003 were well below average when compared with all schools nationally, and with those of schools with a similar point score based on Year 6 tests. In 2004 the test results show considerable improvement in mathematics and some improvement in science, though not yet in English. The school exceeded its target in mathematics, but did not achieve the rather unrealistic targets for English and science. Girls are performing better than boys in English, but boys are doing better than girls in science and mathematics.
2. Achievement generally in Years 7 to 9 has been affected by staffing difficulties, but is improving as these are being resolved. Achievement in the current Years 7 to 9 is now satisfactory. Standards are improving in English, mathematics and science, though still below average in English and average in mathematics and science. In most other subjects achievement is satisfactory, though good in mathematics, religious education and physical education. Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT where standards have been particularly affected by staffing difficulties and until recently, by a lack of equipment.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.4 (32.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.7 (34.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.0 (30.8)	35.6 (35.7)

*There were 210 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2002.*

##### **Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)**

3. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but standards are higher overall and there is more good achievement, mainly because the school has focused more strongly on these year groups. The proportion of good teaching is higher and these classes have had less disruption through staff

turnover, though some classes have been affected. The changes to the curriculum have improved students' motivation.

4. GCSE results in 2004, were much improved, with four in every ten students achieving 5 or more A\* to C grades compared with a quarter of students in previous years. The school significantly exceeded its target. The results in religious education were particularly good and students did better than in all other subjects. They did worse in ICT than in other subjects. Girls did better than boys overall, though not in science. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, the school's results were well below the national average and indicate that a significant number of students underachieved. The school is very aware that these included some students from ethnic minorities, particularly black boys, and is taking appropriate action.
5. In the current Years 10 and 11, though standards are still below average in English, mathematics and science, there is less under-achievement. Students are working at above average standards in religious education and average standards in geography, history, design and technology, physical education and music. They are achieving well in these subjects and also in modern languages, where standards are rising but have not yet reached average standards. Students are also achieving well in the vocational courses such as hairdressing and construction where they are on track to achieve the appropriate qualifications. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects except ICT where students' limited experience in Years 7 to 9, and staffing difficulties, mean that students start the course at a disadvantage.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	26 (25)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	73 (81)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	89 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	24.7(26.3)	25.4 (34.7)

*There were 221 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2002.*

6. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily across all years and in most subjects. In Years 10 and 11 they are entered for a range of GCSE examinations and some also opt to take a number of vocational subjects. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, all students with statements of special educational need attained at least two A\* to G grade passes and one attained 6 A\* to C grade passes as well as 4 A\* to G grade passes. Students with English as an additional language, including those who join the school late, show excellent attitudes to mentoring and revision programmes so they achieve well at GCSE.

**Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Attitudes and behaviour across the entire school community are good. Courtesy and consideration to others is very much in evidence. Students have a mature outlook on life in school and demonstrate a desire to work with the staff in taking it forward. Spiritual, development is satisfactory and moral, social and cultural development is very good.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school
- Students' attitudes are generally good and some very good
- Students care about the school and take pride in it
- Relationships between the staff and students are very good
- Attendance and punctuality continue to improve but unauthorised absence is still too high
- Students are willing to assume responsibility through school councils and the prefect system
- Cultural, moral and social development is very good and includes multi-cultural work across the curriculum; it is particularly strong in drama

- Students are confident that bullying or other inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with promptly

### Commentary

7. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are good and are often very good. Students are very positive about the school and are keen to emphasise that it is “their school”. They were all notably extremely smart in their uniform, demonstrating a pride in themselves and their school. The vast majority thoroughly enjoy attending; are absorbed in their tasks and overall school life, this remains sustained throughout the school day. They participate in large numbers and with real enthusiasm in the substantial range of extra-curricular activities on offer to them.
8. In mainstream lessons, the attitudes and behaviour of students with special educational needs are generally very similar to those of other students. Where learning support assistants (LSAs) or support teachers are present to provide additional support this is accepted well by all; others often taking advantage of their presence and seeking extra help themselves. The attitudes and behaviour of those students in withdrawal lessons are very good and this results in a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere. Year 9 students with statements of special educational need are particularly appreciative of the help, support and guidance they receive from the learning support department.
9. The positive and warm relationship between staff and students was very evident. The students have responded to the very positive role models that adults in the school present to them. Students were keen to emphasise that they were always treated with respect and dignity. During the inspection it was rare to hear a raised voice from anyone. Students also get on very well with each other and relationships between different ethnic groups are very good.
10. Although attendance remains unsatisfactory, the school has taken robust and effective action which in the last year has raised overall attendance to over 91%. This improvement brings the school close to the latest available national figures. Daily monitoring ensures that absences are swiftly reported and followed up. A daily “swoop” at the school gate has significantly reduced lateness and internal truancy. Families who have difficulties in ensuring their child’s regular attendance at school, are identified and supported. This is helping to reduce unauthorised absence, but this is still too high. All these measures have produced significant results and additionally, as the school improves, students who had in the past absented themselves, are realising the obvious benefits of attending this school on a regular basis. Thus they are responding positively and at their own volition.

#### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence	
School data:	9.7
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	1.3
National data:	1.1

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2002- 2003 (the latest year for which national data is available).*

11. Students accept responsibility very well. The year councils deal with specific issues that affect them and contribute to discussions of whole school issues. The students know that their views are important, they are being listened to, and have much to contribute. The school council, which is elected from the year councils, is influential. Council members are highly regarded and put forward the views of the whole school with tangible results. For example, the complete restoration of the school’s toilet facilities to a very high standard was prompted by the school councils. They are consulted on all important policy issues such as bullying and behaviour. Older students are encouraged to apply to become prefects.
12. As a consequence of the various opportunities, personal development is good and there are some very strong features of overall social development and understanding of others. Personal, social and health education continues to develop well. It is increasingly co-

ordinated and woven into the overall caring ethos of the school and across the curriculum. Some additional opportunities are taken effectively during form time and assemblies.

13. Overall the provision for students' cultural, moral and social development is very good. World issues, themes and thoughts are widely discussed at assembly and during form time and lessons. Representing a diverse and multi-cultural community, the school has very successfully harnessed the wide variety of skills, backgrounds and traditions of the students to enrich and celebrate their lives, understanding and aspirations. This was particularly evident in the drama and much of the art seen during the inspection.
14. Spiritual development is satisfactory, students have both knowledge of, and respect for the beliefs and religious traditions of their own and other faith communities. The curriculum also allows students to appreciate the sacrifices that others have made to ensure religious and racial freedoms of expression and equality that we now enjoy. They demonstrate a practical understanding of these issues through the harmony and tolerance shown throughout the school.
15. The school has an effective, straightforward policy on bullying which commands and receives respect. Students, parents and staff all agree that bullying will not be tolerated. Students have every confidence that the school will deal promptly with any occurrence and consequently it is not a serious issue. Students are clearly mutually supportive in this school and display care and concern for each other. They feel confident in being able to draw any instance of inappropriate behaviour to the attention of staff if needs be.
16. The induction procedures with the main local primary schools are very good. Students visit and sample lessons, meet the head of year and they know in advance their tutor group and timetable which builds their confidence and helps them settle quickly. The home-school partnership document is comprehensive and every aspect of the school is clearly and thoughtfully set out to students and parents. A very effective peer mentoring system is most reassuring for the students, who feel secure and happy with the school from the outset.
17. The school has been successful in halving its rate of exclusions. Much use is made of counselling students or referral to a senior member of staff. The training for staff in behaviour management has made a major contribution to improving students' attitudes. Staff are generally positive role models. The student support centre has a highly significant role in developing positive behaviour and attitudes in students who might otherwise be disaffected. The alternative curriculum programme and other initiatives help challenging students to accept personal responsibility for their behaviour. This often enables them to return quickly to full participation in school life.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of students*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of students on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	706	49	2
White – any other White background	11	3	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	25	5	
Mixed – any other mixed background	8	4	
Asian or Asian British	30	8	

Black or Black British – Caribbean
No ethnic group recorded

62
60

10	2
4	

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school is providing a satisfactory education. The teaching is sound overall. The curriculum is good and the developments in vocational learning are very good. The school takes very good care of students' welfare, health and safety and involves them in its work and development. It also provides good guidance and support.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Just over nine out of every ten lessons were satisfactory or better, and in Years 10 and 11, more than seven out of every ten lessons were good or better. Where the teaching was less than satisfactory, it was mainly because the work was not well matched to students' needs. Assessment is not consistent enough.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Classroom organisation and routines promote good attitudes to learning and behaviour
- The range of teaching techniques and the lively approach maintain a good level of interest
- The teaching of the vocational courses is good
- Some teaching was unsatisfactory because some new or less experienced staff were unsure of the levels at which students should be working
- In some lessons more consolidation was needed before moving on to new work
- Assessment and marking are not consistent enough and students are not always clear about how to improve their work
- Students with special educational needs receive good support
- Very good relationships and mutual respect help to promote learning
- Worthwhile homework is not being set and marked consistently

### **Commentary**

18. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages, though the proportion of good and very good teaching was higher in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This was mostly because the staff teaching in those year groups tended to be more experienced. However, good teaching was evident in all year groups and almost all subjects. The teaching in the vocational courses, religious studies, mathematics, history and physical education was good. It was at least satisfactory in all other subjects.
19. Teachers generally have good knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subjects. Where the teaching was good or very good, the lively approach and good range of activities helped to motivate students and make learning interesting and enjoyable. Teachers organised their classes well and the routines promoted good behaviour and attitudes so that all students were able to learn. They used a wide range of methods to keep lessons moving at a brisk pace, though on some occasions it was a little too fast and more consolidation was needed to ensure that students fully understood what they were doing before moving on to the next topic.
20. Explanation, demonstration, practical work, group discussion, and on a few occasions, ICT, were all used in different ways to motivate students to enjoy learning. The work was carefully and effectively matched to students' individual needs. For example in a very good drama lesson in Year 8, the explanation of the ground rules for the group tasks, the questioning to check that students had understood and the setting of very clear targets, gave them confidence and enabled all students to gain a better understanding of the dramatic techniques involved. Similarly in a very good Year 10 mathematics lesson on velocity and acceleration, the students' active participation in the well-organised practical work increased their knowledge and encouraged them to develop their ideas.
21. Teachers work hard, and mostly successfully, to engage students' attention and interest, as many are not naturally well-motivated learners. There were occasional instances of low level

disruption or lack of attention, but these were generally dealt with effectively and teachers were using the school's systems and procedures. There was little evidence of more serious misbehaviour being allowed to interfere with the education of other students.

22. A good feature of the teaching in the vocational subjects is the clear way in which links are made between the work in school and the requirements of different occupations. Students are gaining good basic knowledge and skills and an understanding of how these are used in the workplace.
23. Support teachers and LSAs generally provided effective support in lessons for students with special educational needs. In humanities lessons, support staff have established good working relationships with their students and know their needs well. In mathematics lessons, students with special educational needs achieve as well as others, because of the effective help and guidance given by support staff. A good range of assessment tests are used to identify students with special educational needs and there is sufficient whole-school data available to enable the tracking of progress. However, the analysis of this data by the learning support department is not sufficiently well developed to enable staff to be certain that students are making adequate progress over a period of time.
24. Students who have English as an additional language receive sensitive help from support staff, many of whom are from ethnically diverse backgrounds. This support helps the students to keep up with subject content. Teachers plan for students' needs and in the best lessons use pictures and diagrams to simplify written texts. The tracking and monitoring shows that most students are making progress in line with other students of their own age. At times the way some teachers, both native speakers and overseas teachers, speak does not provide a good enough model and this slows the understanding of the students.
25. Where teaching was less than satisfactory, this was mainly because the work was not well enough planned to meet students' needs. This was usually because inexperienced or new teachers did not fully understand the levels at which students should be working. At times, lower-attaining students struggled with work which they found difficult and on a few occasions also, not enough demands were made on the higher-attaining students. Occasionally, the teaching was dull in approach and did not engage students' interest. As a result they made little progress.
26. Though good work is being done to develop assessment, it is not yet satisfactory. Most teachers mark students' work regularly, but the usefulness of the marking and other assessment varies both between and within departments. The good assessment and marking help students to improve their work, but much of it does not give students enough guidance on how to improve. Similarly, the extent to which teachers are using assessment data when planning work is variable, and some of the assessment information is not consistently reliable enough. The school's assessment working party has produced good guidance and where this is being used effectively, assessment has improved and is more useful to teachers and students. The amount and quality of homework being set varies too much between subjects and between teachers. Opportunities to extend and consolidate work done in school through worthwhile homework are frequently missed.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 130 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1.5%)	28 (22%)	51 (39%)	37 (28%)	9 (7%)	2 (1.5%)	0 (0%)

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

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a good curriculum that has been developed to respond to students' needs. The curriculum is promoting higher standards and better achievement. The activities provided outside lessons are very good, but the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Overall, accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 gives students a very wide range of choice
- A comprehensive programme of clubs, activities and visits enhances learning
- Senior managers make full use of national and local initiatives to improve the curriculum and they regularly monitor its effect on students' achievement
- Personal, social and health education is well structured and effective
- All groups of students have good access to the curriculum
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship

### **Commentary**

27. The curriculum is developing very well to meet students' needs and interests. In Years 7 to 9, extra staff help students who have below average numeracy and literacy skills to reach the expected standard for their age group. This successful intervention strategy acts as a model of good practice within the local authority. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good. The school has taken full advantage of the opportunity to make the curriculum more flexible and better adapted to the needs of all students, but particularly those for whom a traditional approach is less suitable. The variety of courses is improving motivation and achievement. The school has received national recognition for its vocational work, which provides on-site NVQ courses in building, catering and hairdressing, and an on-line GNVQ science course. Senior managers meet weekly to evaluate the current curriculum and to plan developments. Starting the new timetable in July rather than September of this year, has improved students' attitudes and achievement, and will remain a feature of curriculum provision.
28. In physical education, students in Years 7 to 9 receive two hours of good quality physical education per week. A high proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 take GCSE physical education and as a result, about three-quarters of students in these year groups have at least two hours of good quality physical education. Those not taking GCSE have an hour a week. The department has excellent links with the local recreation centre and uses a number of qualified outside coaches to help broaden students' learning experiences even further, for example, in non-traditional activities. It is not involved in any national PE initiatives, for example, the local schools' sports co-ordinator scheme.
29. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, which support students' learning, welfare and achievement. The well-attended activities cater for all age groups and are run by teachers, community workers and specialist coaches. The programme includes homework and revision clubs, breakfast and after school care, and many different sports clubs. There are regular theatre visits, workshops and school productions. Art links with the community are well developed and the provision of artists in residence is funded by the Marsh Farm Development Trust.
30. The school makes good provision for students' personal, social and health education (PHSE). A well-structured programme is taught by form tutors and supported by good use of other curriculum time. Year 9 students did role-play in a lesson and in form time. The theme of helping others, was developed by an outside speaker at the Year 9 assembly. The PHSE programme prepares students well for leaving school. Careers work, including work related learning, needs more planning and resources.

31. Equality of access and opportunity for students of different abilities and different ethnic origins is good. The provision for students with special educational needs is good and students who have been identified as having special gifts and talents are well catered for. The provision for students who have English as an additional language is sound overall, with some strengths.
32. Students with special educational needs have full and equal access to the curriculum and are fully involved in the life of the school. Alongside the traditional range of GCSE courses, the school offers a range of vocational courses to meet the full ability range of students in years 10 and 11. The school's very strong ethos of inclusion and support has a positive impact on the academic and social development not just of students with special educational needs, but also of all other students in the school. The special educational needs provision in individual subjects is satisfactory but more variable. In mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education it is good; in ICT and design and technology it is unsatisfactory. Most curriculum areas are kept fully informed of special educational needs as a result of regular liaison with the learning support department. Staff are generally aware of the needs of gifted and talented students but not all departments are yet making specific provision. However individual needs are identified and students are funded to attend courses outside school. There is also a regular summer school.
33. The school's Equal Opportunities Group works with subject staff to increase awareness of the needs of these student who have English as an additional language, but partnership in planning with support staff is still uneven across the school. The after-school club set up for speakers of English as an additional language is an example of very good provision. Students from all years attend, with friends and younger siblings, and are taught formal English using a suite of laptops and an interactive whiteboard to develop their literacy and computer skills. Older students help younger ones to produce a magazine with their views on books, computer games, their country of origin and what is important in life. Posters of international leaders from different ethnic groups and the use of works from different world cultures raise the self-esteem of students from ethnic minorities. They also help other students to develop an understanding of the contribution of other cultures to life in this country.
34. The school now has a satisfactory number of teachers. Acute shortages have been overcome through overseas recruitment and imaginative appointment of community personnel. The school provides very good training opportunities producing teachers who become established staff. The community benefits well from the support staff. For example, ICT technicians are shared with primary schools. The school has sufficient experienced special educational needs support teachers and LSAs to support those students with statements of special educational need as well as other students on the school's list. LSAs have a wide range of experience and expertise and are enthusiastic and committed to working with students with special educational needs. Their effective deployment ensures the curricular needs of these students are met.
35. Good accommodation benefits both school and community and includes a recreation centre, drama theatre, concert hall and hairdressing salon. The nursery and the youth club are well used. Continuing improvements to accommodation take account of students' views and they appreciate this. Classroom space is generally adequate but mathematics has overcrowding problems. The secure site is well maintained, providing very good access for the disabled.
36. Overall, resources are satisfactory. Good improvements have been made in the availability of computers for students and teachers. In subjects such as modern foreign languages, additional non-teaching time for teachers is helping curriculum development. Good resources include specialist protective clothing and equipment for vocational courses. Shortfalls exist in digital resources for art and computer-aided manufacturing. The school does not make as much use of the wider business community as it could, to support teaching and learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The school makes very good provision for the care of its students and their personal development is well monitored. Students are consulted and involved very fully in the work of the school. Older students take considerable responsibility for providing support for other students. Academic monitoring is satisfactory and improving.

### **Main strengths**

- Students feel very confident that there are adults in the school to whom they can go for support and advice
- Students feel that they are trusted
- Students appreciate that their tutors know them well
- Pastoral systems in the school work well
- Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language receive well focused support for both academic and personal development
- There is a strong team of support staff in the school
- The school has established a range of good systems to improve academic support; including mentoring and progress review days

### **Commentary**

37. The school is a safe, caring and secure environment for students to learn and develop. The pastoral team made up of year heads and tutors, supported by senior staff and the Student Support Centre, has promoted an overall school ethos of a strong and deeply caring community.
38. Arrangements for the care and welfare of students are very good. Child protection procedures are fully in place and supported by strong relationships with the education welfare service, social services and the police. First aid, medical care and general health and safety provision around the school are very good.
39. The work of the senior management team, year heads and tutors is very effective. Staff make it their business to know every student well and to be aware of any problems or difficulties. Students value and trust staff at every level and know that they can approach them at any time to discuss any problem or issue. This was demonstrated by the responses in their questionnaires and was also frequently expressed in discussion during the inspection. Early referrals and intervention mean that students with social or behavioural difficulties are counselled and cared for sensitively. Students feel confident in being able to express their personal problems or discuss other barriers to their learning or general happiness. This generally meant they could remain within the school community and continue their learning.
40. Interviews with students revealed that a range of issues originating both within and outside school were resolved sensitively and confidentially. Subsequent unobtrusive monitoring was very much appreciated by the students, their parents and carers. The provision of PHSE and other life skills enable students to develop confidence and take responsibility. During the inspection, numerous examples were noticed of the care and responsibility some students assumed towards those less able than themselves.
41. Those students with special educational and language needs are very well cared for and encouraged to succeed academically. Provision is highly focused on the needs of the individual. A great deal of one-to-one support is provided from the Learning Support Department which is well resourced and provides a safe and reassuring environment for students to learn and gain confidence. Provision for students with physical disabilities is particularly good. Numerous alterations and amendments to the building make it possible for all students to be involved in the life of the school.

42. The school has effective working relationships with specialist agencies which enhances further the quality of support and guidance for students with special educational needs. Effective annual support students with statements of special educational need as they move through the school. Parents' and students' views are taken into account because they are involved in setting and reviewing their targets.
43. The school has an ethnically diverse population and an increasing number of students for whom English is an additional language, though few are at an early stage of learning English. A careful programme of induction and individual teaching helps speakers at an early stage to integrate well in the classroom. Students' progress is tracked and monitored to ensure that most make progress in line with students of their own age. The 'Black Boys Can' project is part of a national scheme dedicated to maximising the learning potential of black boys and improving their life chances. It is encouraging black boys to achieve as well as other students and has helped to reduce exclusions from class and improve attitudes to education.
44. The work of the school is greatly assisted by a very strong team of dedicated and highly-motivated support staff. This ranges from some highly effective Teaching Assistants to the school's own maintenance personnel. Most of the administrative and facility functions come under the auspices of the Business Manager who, as part of the senior management team, has a clear and focused vision as to how the bringing together of the component parts in running a very large school site will support the overall provision given to the students. This group of staff present excellent examples of role model, care, courtesy and respect to students who respond accordingly.
45. Thorough maintenance of the school site ensures that the building and school equipment are safe. The entire environment is clean and predominantly free from litter, graffiti or vandalism. Students treat the fabric of the school with respect. The physical security of the building, environs and perimeter are generally very good and monitored by a CCTV and intruder alarm system.
46. The systems for guidance and support for students are sound and improving. Many teachers provide effective support and guidance in their lessons by making clear, for example, exactly what the requirements are for gaining good grades in a student's chosen subject but the school is aware that this needs to be more systematic in all subjects. The school actively seeks to involve students and their parents in raising standards. It is underpinned by a *Student Review Day* programme where data is used to set targets, review progress and track the progress of individual students. The success of this initiative is reflected in the improved GCSE results for 2004.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's partnership with parents is good. Community links are very good and continue to develop strongly contributing to the improvement of the school and the achievement of the students. Links with other schools are good and links with the colleges are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are mostly supportive and believe that the school has improved
- There is a good range of information; an informative prospectus, weekly newsletters and Key Stage 3 booklet
- Very good community links with a wide range of organisations encompass activities such as sport and the arts
- Links with local primary schools are good
- Productive college links have a very strong impact on the curriculum and student motivation
- The school works hard to engage parents, with good responses to Review Day and consultation meetings
- Diaries are not used as well as they could be for communication to parents

- Parents have concerns about the consistency over homework, marking and expectations for behaviour

### Commentary

47. The majority of parents are supportive of the school and its work. Many indicated in their questionnaire responses that they were extremely positive about the way the school is developing. This was also reflected by some parents at the pre-inspection meeting. They particularly like the induction procedures, the school's developing ethos and standards. They greatly approve of the range of vocational options and other activities on offer.
48. The school communicates well with parents through a variety of means; a professionally produced prospectus, weekly newsletters and other material in plain language. The booklet for students in Years 7 to 9 is especially informative about the school and what is on offer to students. The school is currently building a new website which will further enhance the opportunity to communicate promptly to parents, community, other stakeholders and those with an interest in the school.
49. The newly formed Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) engages in fund raising, social events and of particular note administers the sale of uniform and equipment. A new PTA shop is shortly planned for the school site.
50. The especially good links with the local community are constantly being strengthened. These links have already raised the reputation and positive profile of the school to an impressive level. The school is now a net partner in the local community, especially through New Deal funding which has given enhanced facilities and shared provision for the neighbourhood. These initiatives have enriched and strengthened overall learning and life skills for the students. The school and its linked community campus is very much open to all local people who use the shared sports and fitness centre seven days a week. A number of local residents and organisations use the school facilities for social and sporting occasions.
51. The school has harnessed the experience and skills the local churches can provide and as a result, the students have outside counselling, youth work and other social skills initiatives available to them. The "Black Boys Can" initiative is one such community-based partnership.
52. The school continues to develop its role in music and the arts for the benefit and enjoyment of the wider community. As an example, a group of students and a member of staff worked on a float for the Luton Carnival with plans in place for an even greater participation next year. The school is also planning to enter the *Luton in Bloom* contest with help and contributions from parents and local residents.
53. Links with local primary schools are particularly productive as they jointly work towards improving the opportunities for local children. Regular meetings between staff and shared use of provision and facilities have also raised the positive profile of the school. The provision of language teaching, PE links, and transition arrangements are continuing to make this school a place where young people aspire to come to continue their education and development.
54. The vocational dimension of the school's curriculum is having a profound effect upon students' motivation. Links with a local college of further education are now particularly strong in this area and many students are now benefiting from a seamless continuation of their vocational studies as they progress on from the school. An ever increasing number of students are also enrolling with the local sixth form college to continue their academic studies.
55. The school works extremely hard to engage and involve parents in the work of their children and the overall life of the school. This is showing positive results and many parents indicated their support for the school in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Parents particularly appreciate *Student Review Days* and the information they obtain by attending and the

consultation meetings where suggestions and issues can be discussed on a one-to-one basis.

56. Some parents indicated disquiet over the inconsistency of homework and marking and these concerns were found to have some substance during the course of the inspection. This is an issue that the school is aware of and is working towards a greater uniformity in the setting and marking of homework across the curriculum. A number of parents expressed concern over perceived lapses in student behaviour from time to time. Whilst there can be no doubt that lapses can and do occur, no such occurrences were witnessed during the inspection. The school does not use student diaries to their best effect. Routine information and weekly student progress is not always available to parents and carers who, for example, could then better monitor homework set and its completion.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good with a very clear focus on raising achievement. The leadership offered by the head teacher is very good. The work of the governors is sound. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

### **Main strengths**

- The excellent clarity of vision and high aspirations of the head teacher have resulted in a much-improved school
- Leadership provides a very clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, standards and ethos of the school
- An effective performance review system provides a good basis for further developing improvements in standards in subject departments
- Procedures for the induction of staff new to the school and the school's contribution to initial teacher training are very good
- The school manages its resources very well and provides satisfactory value for money
- Governors are highly committed and bring a wide range of expertise to the school

### **Commentary**

57. The head teacher runs the school with excellent clarity of vision and aspirations for its students and staff. Her priority is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to enable students to achieve as well as possible academically and for their individual needs to be fully met. This has resulted in higher standards. In particular, provisional GCSE results for 2004 have risen, there is now much good teaching and the quality of the school's learning environment has improved. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been broadened to include vocational courses alongside the more traditional subjects. Parents and students feel the school has improved and have been very supportive of the changes made.
58. The head teacher, her senior leadership team and others with management responsibilities work well together. Staff share the head teacher's sense of purpose and very clear focus on improving the quality the quality of education offered by the school. The school development plan clearly reflects the head teacher's ambitions for the school and subject departments are now closely involved in implementing the priorities. There are some relative weaknesses in leadership at middle management level but the school is taking appropriate action to improve consistency in this respect. The school is very strongly committed to inclusion and fully meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The leadership team and other staff with responsibilities are very good role models for other staff and students.
59. The governing body is highly committed, and governors bring a wide range of expertise to the school. Through a new 'key dial' structure, governors are developing their knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as well as becoming more involved in strategic planning and monitoring. Governors clearly want the school to do well. They are very supportive of the head teacher, the senior management team and other staff. At

the same time, they are developing their role to challenge critically when appropriate. Governance is satisfactory overall. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all students is not fully met, partly because the school hall is too small for everyone to attend an assembly.

60. The provision for special educational needs has a high profile in the school. Effective leadership and management procedures have resulted in a very strong whole school ethos for the inclusion and support of students with special educational needs. The school pays due regard to the Code of Practice for special educational needs and statutory requirements are fully met.
61. The school management is good overall with some notable strengths. The school is very effective in training teachers, a number of whom stay on and contribute to the increasing standards achieved by students. All new staff receive very effective induction so that they understand and support the school ethos and systems. Training for serving staff is good, as is the management of their performance and effectiveness.
62. Financial planning is very good and the school receives significant funds from grants and initiatives, which are over and above its basic budget. As a result the school has been able to develop facilities and curriculum areas as part of a well-prioritised programme, with a clear focus on achieving 'Best Value'. Resources are well managed to meet the school's priorities and the educational needs of its students. Financial reserves are clearly earmarked for specific purposes.
63. There is a clear focus on how to improve the whole school and effective methods exist to enable this. The system for collecting and managing data about student performance is effective, and this has been used well to target areas needing work. However, this is not yet fully effective at department level. Self- evaluation has also been used well to measure progress and focus action.

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	£4858895
Total expenditure	£4556496
Expenditure per pupil	£4144

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	£253779
Balance carried forward to the next	£556178

### Work-related learning

64. Provision in **work-related learning** is **good** and statutory requirements are met. The school has been able to build on its existing good practice to develop an effective approach to work-related learning for all students. The range of vocational opportunities open to students has been considerably extended through the introduction of GNVQ science and City and Guilds courses in construction, hairdressing and catering and applied GCSE in ICT in addition to the established GCSE courses in business studies and leisure and tourism. This means that a high proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 are taking courses which are clearly work-related. Other subjects are in the process of identifying their potential to contribute to work-related learning either through activities which develop understanding of business or work, or using work as a context for learning. All students in Year 10 have the opportunity to take part in work experience. This area of the school's work is well led and the planned strategy for the programme is appropriate and manageable.

## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

Subjects were not reported in detail in the last inspection report, so a judgement for improvement in subjects is not possible.

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8, 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Dynamic leadership and a recently strengthened team of specialist teachers are promoting higher standards
- Boys are under-achieving in GCSE at the higher grades of A\* to C
- Lively ways of teaching interest all students
- Assessment is not reliable enough across both key stages
- Students do not have enough opportunities to practise structured writing

#### Commentary

65. Students join the school with below average standards in reading and well below average standards in writing. Results in national tests at the end of the Year 9 in 2003 were well below the national average for the age group for both boys and girls, and well below the results of similar schools. Since 2000, the trend in attainment in English has been below the national trend, with boys achieving slightly less well than girls. The 2004 results were similar to 2003. GCSE English results in 2003 were below the national level, with girls achieving significantly better than boys in both subjects at grades C and above. The results for 2004 show improvement, particularly in English literature, though girls are still performing better than boys.
66. Overall, current standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are below the national average and students' achievement is satisfactory given their levels on entry. Students know how to analyse the often challenging texts they read and can use technical terms when they comment. They are able to write creatively, but do not have enough opportunities for structured factual writing. The presentation in Year 7 work and in higher sets is good, but handwriting in lower sets is often untidy and spelling is weak overall. Students know how to listen well to others in discussions and during presentations.
67. In Years 10 and 11, overall achievement is satisfactory. Students learn how to write essays analysing novels, plays and poems and can comment on the writer's choice of words and overall purpose. They can discuss productively in small groups, but are hesitant to work independently. Most students often make technical mistakes and are not given enough short, focused writing tasks which would particularly help the boys. Students with special needs and students with English as an additional language achieve as well as other students. In the best lessons, gifted students are given challenges in the classroom.

68. Teaching and learning were satisfactory overall and good in Years 7 to 9 where over half of the teaching seen was good or very good. The improvement in teaching appears relatively recent, and has not yet had time to be reflected in higher standards. In this improving department, teachers have a good understanding of the subject and use a range of teaching styles to enable students to learn with enjoyment. In one Year 8 lesson in which the boys were taught separately to help them make faster progress, the class was divided into separate tables named after characters in a film and they competed intensely in a range of activities leading to the writing of their own fables. In another Year 8 lesson a mixed class of lower-achieving students all worked hard in groups to plan and present a character analysis using well-chosen examples from the novel *Holes*. In a Year 10 lesson on *Macbeth*, students acted the parts in class in different ways to understand the impact of the scene on an audience. The best teaching has a clear focus on one aim reinforced by linked activities which consolidate the students' understanding. Teaching is weakest where students are not given the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned. Opportunities are also often missed to reinforce learning by well-planned follow-up activities at home.
69. Leadership and management are good. There is a new vision and direction to the team but the changes are recent and improvements are at an early stage of implementation and have not had time to be reflected in better results. Recent staffing problems have been resolved by new appointments. Data is beginning to be used to plan for individual students' needs and students are starting to be given clear advice on how to improve. Inconsistency in the quality and reliability of marking is a weakness in the subject but significant steps have been taken to standardise teachers' assessment of students' work. The curriculum includes drama and writing about different media, but students' work showed little evidence of computers being used to help them learn.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. Students' literacy skills are satisfactory overall and the provision to meet literacy needs is broadly satisfactory, though very variable across the curriculum. Basic help is evident in all subject areas. Key words are displayed in most classrooms, reinforced by teachers and mainly corrected in books. Some good practice is developing in several subjects. In mathematics students have helpful definitions written in books and in science they are required to read aloud as well as write explanations in their own words. Technical language is used in discussing the functions of words in both French and in English, where students also use dictionaries and have helpful prompts on how to write accurately. Students have the chance to write at length in religious education and in history, Year 7 students learn how writers create interesting effects and apply that knowledge by writing their own version of history. Overall, however, many opportunities to develop students' literacy skills are missed. In particular, the conventions of writing non-fiction in different subject areas are not generally made clear to the students. The library is well-stocked and used, particularly by students in Years 7 to 9, but research skills are not taught across subjects in ways which would reinforce learning.

### Modern foreign languages

Provision in French and Spanish is good.

	Years 7, 8, 9	Years 10, 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good
- The new leadership of a committed team of teachers provides clear direction for raising standards
- Assessment and marking lack consistency across the department
- The needs of more able students are not met
- The use of ICT is being integrated into teaching, but students do not use it as a method to enhance learning
- There is no extra-curricular provision

### Commentary

71. In 2003, the proportion of students achieving A\* to C in French or Spanish was well below national average. There was some improvement in 2004 representing better achievement by the students involved.
72. Standards in French and Spanish in the current Year 9 are below national expectations. Achievement is satisfactory overall: students make clear gains in knowledge, enjoying their lessons and developing confidence in speaking and understanding the language. More able students are not always challenged appropriately: in lessons, little use was made of the past tense and there was relatively little evidence in the written work.
73. In Year 11, standards in French and Spanish are below average. In Year 10 well structured lesson planning takes students through the four skills of speaking, listening and reading and writing but expectations in the latter are low, particularly for the more able.
74. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. The majority of lessons seen were good or very good with one excellent lesson. All teachers, some of whom are native speakers, have a very good command of the languages they teach. The good teaching is beginning to show in better achievement. However, in some of the lessons too much English was used in explanations and classroom instructions denying students additional opportunities to practise the language. The consistency of planning provides a clear format for students' learning: objectives are shared with students. In the best lessons the teachers have high expectations. The students' attitudes are positive in the great majority of lessons where they respond well to the pace and to a variety of relevant activities. In some lessons, however, there is not sufficient consolidation to ensure that students have fully understood what they have learnt.
75. ICT is used by teachers in enterprising ways to present vocabulary and phrases and, as a result, students understand, acquire and practise new language in this part of the lesson. Students also make good progress when they practise informally and responsibly in groups or in pairs. There is scope for raising expectations of more able students, for example by requiring more extended writing in class and homework. Teachers do not set targets, assess students rigorously or track students' achievement closely and consistently showing them ways to improve. There was no evidence of the use of ICT by students in lessons or in the written work seen.
76. Leadership is good. The department has suffered from staffing difficulties in recent years and this has had a negative impact on standards and achievement. Over the last eight months the department has become more stable, working in the same direction with firm policies. The department is well managed and operates well as a team. Clear strategies are in place to raise standards and the profile of languages within the school. In Year 10, a number of students who wished to, but were unable to continue the study of a Modern Foreign Language, receive lessons after school. A comprehensive review of provision has been carried out and many initiatives are being introduced to establish quality and consistency. Schemes of work are gradually being rewritten and include components such as literacy and numeracy. ICT should be identified more overtly in lesson plans. Teachers have been given additional remission time to observe each other's lessons to broaden their skills and share good practice: in a Year 10 mixed-ability class the

support teacher helped students who found the subject difficult and in Year 11 both teachers were team teaching. Monitoring is planned to ensure that this allocated time is used effectively.

77. Overall, the department's resources and accommodation are good. The department enjoys a suite of rooms each equipped with an interactive board. The quality of the environment in languages rooms is colourful, well resourced and conducive to learning. There is no extra-curricular provision to encourage students and help them with their learning.

## Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

  

Leadership	Good
Management	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enthusiastic, well-paced teaching involves everyone and students enjoy learning
- High expectations of all students and effective support for underachievers and those with special educational needs, are raising standards
- Misbehaviour is firmly and quietly dealt with, so learning is little disrupted
- Marking and assessment are not providing enough guidance for students to improve
- Students' achievement in lower sets is held back when they have to struggle with work which is too difficult

### Commentary

78. Results in the 2003 Year 9 tests, were well below the national average. The 2004 results were markedly better. Girls did better than boys. The 2003 GCSE results were well below the national average. The 2004 results showed clear improvement with a higher proportion of students gaining grades A\*, A and B.
79. Students' mathematical attainment on entry to the school is below average. In lessons observed, Year 7 students were only just coping with number operations and problems. Students in Year 9 lessons were using numbers and symbols together, and competently removing brackets. This represents good achievement. The quantity of unmarked work and the matching of teachers' skills and experience to particular sets are factors limiting students' achievement in Years 10 and 11. Throughout the school, students in lower sets are making slow progress when their mathematical skills do not enable them to do the work given. In contrast, students in top sets achieve highly because the work suits their needs. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on speed and velocity, students used formulae to explore the concepts involved and reasoned the difference between the two measures.
80. Teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory. It was most effective when teachers and students enjoyed lesson activities together and high standards of work and behaviour were insisted upon. This was observed in a Year 8 lesson where students had fun using matchsticks to build triangles in two dimensions, and moved briskly on to learn how to investigate the mathematical pattern of growth. One half of the students present had special educational needs. Very good support enabled them to achieve highly and as well as others. A particularly successful aspect of teaching is the Year 7 springboard classes and the targeted support for individuals in Years 8 and 9, which helps below average students raise their standard to that expected for the age group. There is provision for able Year 10 students to take the GCSE examination a year early. There are after-school classes for Year 11 students to do revision or to take additional mathematics.
81. Following an unsettled period of staff changes, leadership is now energetically and firmly established. Team building is taking place. The work of the department has been evaluated to identify strengths and weaknesses. There is clear vision of what needs to be done to improve. The revision of schemes of work is being well managed. At present, the quality of

marking is not consistent throughout the department. There is too much unmarked work and use of brief comments that give students no idea how to improve. Assessment of work is not making National Curriculum levels obvious or providing students with clear targets for improvement.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

82. Students' mathematical skills are sufficient for them to access the curriculum. However the provision for numeracy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, because it is not well enough promoted or developed. There is no co-ordinator to do this. The school has a policy, but its guidelines are not established practice. Few examples were seen of students being asked to use their mathematical skills in the wider context. Year 7 students used geometrical shapes in an art lesson, a Year 8 class used statistics to study crime and Year 9 did calculations on energy conversions in science.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

  

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results show a consistent upward trend, with a significant improvement for Year 11 in 2004
- Students display good relationships and have a good attitude to learning
- A more rigorous use of teaching strategies is required in order to provide further challenge and to engage the students in their learning
- Students' performance data is not analysed enough to aid monitoring, guidance and setting of individual improvement targets
- Students have a good choice of examination courses in Years 10 and 11, including an on-line GNVQ vocational course
- Science teachers are well-qualified and experienced

## Commentary

83. Students enter the school with below average attainment levels for science. Results from the Year 9 national tests in 2003, continue to show a gradual improvement on the low values of 1999. The 2004 results maintain this upward trend and pattern, though they did not meet the ambitious target set for the department. However, these results were well below average when compared to all students nationally and when compared to similar schools. Overall, boys attained better than girls. Students did less well in science than in mathematics and English indicating a level of underachievement.
84. At GCSE, the 2003 results for grades A\*-C improved slightly on the previous year but were again well below the national average. However, a small number of students gained the top grades. In 2004, the overall A\*-C pass rate for Year 11 students rose by twelve percent, suggesting improved levels of achievement from these students, compared with how well they had done in their Year 9 national tests. In 2003, girls did significantly worse in science than in their other subjects, due largely to the high proportion of the year group gaining grade D passes.
85. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' books from Years 7 to 9 indicates satisfactory progress. Work was well presented indicating that students have pride in their work. Standards are now much closer to those expected nationally, though data handling and the use of graphs remain weak. Students in Years 10 and 11 respond well to the increasing

challenge of GCSE work. The quality of answers and presentation indicate continued good progress in each of the three science courses. This is particularly true of students studying double science, several of whom are on target for the A\* grade. Work of the learning support staff was effective which enabled students with special educational needs to make good progress.

86. Standards seen on the GNVQ course were also noteworthy and several students are producing work appropriate to merit and distinction awards. The teaching on this course was good. The use of real-life examples which made links with industry and commerce, careful questioning, a good match of work to the range of attainment in the class and positive relationships were all contributing to the generally good achievement. The well-motivated students displayed good ICT skills and could extract and analyse information.
87. Teachers plan lessons well and the pace and pitch of lessons was appropriate to the students' abilities. In one excellent lesson on genetics, the teaching style was a crucial factor in the lesson and these highly-motivated Year 11 students were made to feel involved in the learning and as a result they made very good progress. In other lessons seen, more challenge was needed in order to raise achievement levels and to provide greater opportunities for individual learning. For some students, learning was insecure and teachers were not checking enough on understanding and on the overall success of lessons. Work of students, both in class and from homework, could be better used to indicate progress against standard criteria. Students needed clear targets and guidance on how to improve. Levels of behaviour and the general motivation of the students were good. Well-presented wall displays in the modern laboratories also contributed to the sound learning environment created.
88. Staffing levels now meet the department's needs and the presence of experienced teachers gives the department a sound basis for the future. The leadership and management are satisfactory and the department is undertaking various initiatives relating to the provision of new courses. The vocationally orientated GNVQ course is a particularly good development. The department is strongly focusing on the need to further improve students' attainments. The teachers form an effective and supportive team and are well supported by hard-working technicians.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Provision in ICT is unsatisfactory.

	Years 7, 8, 9	Years 10, 11
Results	Below average	Well below average
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Unsatisfactory
Leadership	New in post	
Management	New in post	

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are well below average because of the lack of a continuous course in the earlier years and insufficient experiences
- The new team of teachers is providing motivating and interesting lessons
- Technical problems with the network server affected lessons during the inspection
- The department does not have a system to monitor and record students' achievements and progress to help match the work to individual needs

## Commentary

89. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are not reliable because of the previous lack of co-ordination and monitoring systems. GCSE results were very low in 2003, but slightly improved to well below average in 2004. The school entered most students in 2004 for the examination. Students generally did worse in ICT than in other subjects.
90. The school has a new team of specialist teachers and the subject is now timetabled so that all students get their entitlement. This recent change is making a difference to achievement in lessons. Unfortunately during the inspection, serious technical difficulties meant that only three lessons were observed where some of the students were able to do practical work. This affected achievement, but resourceful teaching meant that students made progress using paperwork and discussion in Years 7 to 9. Students were seen planning presentations using storyboards, and have considered designs for a water-park poster.
91. The work sampled from the previous term showed that many students had weaker skills than usual when they started the course, but had not progressed sufficiently by the end of Year 9. Standards and achievement were better in the sample of work from Years 7 and 8.
92. GCSE students have not previously had the benefit of a continuous course from the start of Year 7 and this has seriously affected standards and achievement in the past. The work sampled showed that aspects of the course were missing and students had not explained their reasoning or evaluated their work sufficiently.
93. In Years 7 to 9, teachers coped well with the lack of working computers to produce lively and stimulating lessons, albeit over-enthusiastic at times that led to some excitable behaviour. The work sampled showed that the students have not benefited from the full range of experiences and the previous course lacked many aspects of the requirements. Worksheets previously used with students had examples of high level language that were not made accessible for students with special educational needs or English as an additional language. Effective use is now being made of the technology and national improvement materials to bring the teaching into line with other schools. The new team currently have insufficient knowledge of the examination requirements. Deadlines set to students for submitting work were too far in the distance. GCSE lessons were plagued by technical problems.
94. The school has taken action recently to halt the decline and improve the subject. The technical team is willing and enthusiastic, but there is weakness in the management of the large numbers of computers. The department does not as yet have a system to monitor, record and assess achievements of individuals or groups of students.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

95. Provision is unsatisfactory because in many areas of the curriculum students have not had opportunities to use ICT in the past. The school now has sets of laptop computers to overcome this weakness. Good use is being made of ICT in science and in mathematics. However, students are not as competent in using ICT as they should be. Very few subjects had samples of work or lessons during the inspection that demonstrated that students were able to use ICT competently to support and enhance their studies. In design & technology they have not had the equipment to use computer-aided manufacturing as required. Art does not have resources for digital manipulation. The school has correctly identified this as an area for development. The ICT co-ordinator for Years 7 to 9 is working closely with the senior management to ensure that rapid progress can be made.

## HUMANITIES

Geography, history, and religious education were inspected in depth, and sociology was sampled. In the lesson of **sociology** seen, standards were above average, because the teaching was

challenging and very good learning resulted. Students achieved well above expectations because they were fully engaged by the logical structure and relevant, and sometimes controversial, issues. They feel very well supported in this subject.

**Geography**

Provision in geography is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards, especially those of boys, have risen in both key stages
- Teachers plan well and try hard to make students think by using interesting and active methods
- Students want to improve, and are enthusiastic about the subject because teachers are encouraging and committed to improvement
- Students are not sufficiently clear on how to improve
- Some systems are not yet in place and teachers lack practice in some recent developments

## Commentary

96. Results of the 2003 Year 9 teacher assessments were below those reported nationally, but were better than the previous year. About a fifth more boys achieved average performance and more boys and girls reached above average, although not the highest, levels. GCSE examination results in 2003 were above average, from a low entry, and in 2004 fell to below average, with a larger number of students. Over four years results have improved gradually.
97. By Year 9 standards are below average overall, but average in lessons in which students are challenged well and supported with adequate guidance and structure. As students start the school well below average and with patchy experience of the subject, this represents good achievement. Standards by Year 11 are average and again students are achieving well.
98. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 because teachers plan well and lessons have a consistently clear structure of starter, main activity and closing summary. Students are becoming used to the routine of learning with clear objectives. They have very good attitudes to learning, and concentrate and participate well in lessons. This continues in Years 10 and 11, especially when teachers set imaginative activities such as group problem solving in Year 11 work on the Lynmouth Flood. Some teaching and learning is more variable. Sometimes too few students understand exactly how to improve, and sometimes teachers' grasp of 'new' methods is not fully secure.
99. Teachers share a clear vision and have a strong commitment to improving students' performance. Teachers often actively involve students in their own learning, and all relationships are very positive. As a result students feel challenged, but supported and secure. Management is satisfactory. Priorities are sound and what needs to be done has been clearly identified and some areas have improved noticeably, for example the increased range of teaching methods and understanding of students' progress over time. However, understanding of exactly how to achieve all targets is less clear, and not all necessary systems are yet in place and working fully, for example in the management of assessment linked to learning objectives. ICT is used well by teachers, for example in presenting new ideas with good visual images, but is under-used by students.

## History

Provision in history is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are keen to improve, and standards have risen in both key stages, especially those of boys
- Teachers plan well and often use innovative and active methods to interest students and make them think
- Students are committed to doing well
- Students are not sufficiently clear on how to improve
- Some systems are not yet in place and teachers lack knowledge of some recent developments

## Commentary

100. Year 9 teacher assessment results in 2003, were below those reported nationally, but were an improvement on the previous year. About a fifth more boys achieved average performance and more of both genders achieved above average, although not the highest, levels. GCSE examination results in 2003 and 2004 were well below the national average, but showed a slight improvement on the previous two years. The poor motivation of a minority of students lowered this year's results.
101. Students' standards on entry are well below average and their experience of the subject is variable. By Year 9, their standards are below average overall, but average in lessons in which they are fully challenged. This represents good achievement. Standards in Year 11 are average. Students achieve well in lessons and most have a desire to do well.
102. In Years 7 to 9, students learn satisfactorily because teachers plan interesting work, which broadly suits their needs. The best teaching is well planned, imaginative in methods and has high expectations supported by clear instructions and explanation. For example Year 7 students enjoy writing their own 'Roman Story', which combines learning history with developing literacy skills. Year 9 students achieved well in a simple but well chosen activity which cleverly re-created the problems of living in nineteenth century industrial towns. As many teachers take classes in these years there is, however, a problem of inconsistency in quality, which lessens the overall impact of teaching. In Years 10 and 11, students are learning well because teachers challenge them more consistently with well-sequenced and structured work, and long-term learning objectives and revision techniques are more clearly established.
103. The department has a clear vision for improvement and teachers work as an enthusiastic and effective team towards their goal of improvement. Relationships with students are very positive and students feel challenged, but supported and secure. The curriculum has been reviewed and good changes made to engage their interest. Management is satisfactory. What needs to be done has been clearly identified, but not all necessary systems are yet in place and working fully, and this is slowing further progress, for example in the management of assessment linked to learning objectives. Also teachers' knowledge has been lacking in some areas needing development. ICT is used well by teachers, but is under-used by students.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen significantly in recent years
- Teaching is good and often very good and students learn diligently
- Leadership is very good and non-specialist colleagues are well supported
- Assessment is under-developed as a means of raising standards

## Commentary

104. Over half of the large number of candidates gained A\* to C grades in the short course in 2003. National statistics are not available for comparison, but this represents creditable attainment. In 2004, results in both the short course and the newly-introduced full course, were impressive, though comparison with national results is not yet possible.
105. In Year 9, current attainment is in line with expectations for the course. Students have a secure knowledge of the principal facts and beliefs of major world religions. They discuss sensitive issues such as apartheid and racism, intelligently and consider other students' views thoughtfully. By Year 11, standards are above expectations. Written work is substantial and well-expressed and orderly. Students maturely discuss religious and moral issues. Religious education makes a very good contribution to developing students' literacy. Students' achieve very well across the school.
106. Teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and have high expectations of their students. Relationships with students are very positive. Lessons are challenging and carefully planned to cater for the range of needs within each group. Recently-introduced setting enables teaching methods to be carefully targeted, which particularly benefits students at either end of the ability range. Teachers use time constructively, employing tight deadlines to achieve a brisk pace of work. Teaching methods are varied to maintain students' interest. Learning matches the quality of teaching. A studious atmosphere is achieved in lessons because of students' good attitudes. They respond readily when required to work in silence on individual written and research tasks. Collaborative tasks are carefully organised, and group work is efficient. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm and commitment effectively, and this is reflected in the students' own attitudes. Teachers use discussion and questioning very successfully to develop and extend students' thinking. Teachers respect students, and their views.
107. Leadership and management are very good with a clear vision for developing religious education and the drive and enthusiasm to succeed. Non-specialist teachers have access to good, supportive materials and helpful advice on teaching methods and resources. The schemes of work reflect requirements well and make a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and multicultural understanding, and to their understanding of citizenship. At present, ICT is too little used, and formal assessment is not used systematically and thoroughly enough to raise standards still further.

## TECHNOLOGY

(The department offers product design GCSE courses in resistant and graphical materials, food technology, textiles and systems; along with a recently introduced range of level 1 vocational courses in catering, hair dressing, and building construction taught in collaboration with Barnfield College).

Provision in technology is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are well below average
- The department has developed good vocational courses to meet the needs of students
- The management of the department has some weaknesses and there is insufficient use of monitoring and assessment in the planning of work
- Computer-aided design and manufacturing is not being taught

## **Commentary**

108. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004, indicate that students are reaching national standards; the inspection of department systems indicates that these results are unreliable because teachers were not sufficiently aware of the attainment levels. GCSE results have improved from being very low in 2003 to well below average in 2004 except in graphic products. Boys' results have improved, however Year 11 girls have done less well than boys in the last two years when compared to the national average. The number of candidates being entered for electronics has increased, but in graphics and resistant materials it has fallen.
109. Students arrive in the school with varied, and below average, previous experiences of the subject. By the end of Year 9, the work sample shows that standards are well below average in the practical work because of the poor fit and finish. Standards in designing are very poor. Standards are now showing improvement in Years 7 and 8. Students' achievement in using computer-aided design is being stifled because of the lack of equipment.
110. Following some acute recruitment difficulties, students are now making satisfactory achievements in lessons because of the improved complement of teachers, instructors and support staff. The innovative development of new vocational courses, with refurbished accommodation, is enabling the department to meet the needs of students better. Consequently, standards of work and achievement in Years 10 and 11 have improved. Good standards and achievement were seen in Year 11 hairdressing and in building lessons. GCSE course work is now becoming more in line with the requirements. Students who have special educational needs do not reach their potential in course work because they do not have the organisational techniques to help them structure their work.
111. The lessons seen throughout the inspection were characterised by firm teaching and good organisation. This resulted in students gaining satisfactory understanding of practical skills, and also in good behaviour.
112. In Years 7 to 9, the strengths evident in the teaching generally, mean that it was satisfactory overall, though some elements were not satisfactory. Teachers and instructors have sound practical subject knowledge, but the work sampled lacked the approaches that form a sound foundation for GCSE. Designing techniques were not being taught enough. Students did not have enough opportunities to put in their own creative ideas and the marking of design work did not explain how they could improve on their achievement.
113. For older students in Years 10 and 11, the vocational course partnership is bringing valuable expertise and interest into the work of the department. Good teaching and opportunities have been developed for students who might otherwise become disaffected. They now enjoy these subjects and many intend to follow routes gaining worthwhile employment or modern apprenticeships. GCSE teaching in food technology is now more in line with the requirements. The teaching of graphic products is weak because of the lack of computer-aided manufacturing and missed opportunities to use local business links in product designing.
114. The leadership has developed new resources; refurbished accommodation and staff have been recruited. The teamwork is good and staff show a willingness to improve. From the

students point of view the subject lacks cohesion, as the aspects traditionally taken by girls and boys are not forming a unified course in Years 7 to 9. The department plans are not linked sufficiently to the overall requirements of design and technology. The department lacks an overview of individual student's achievements. Health and safety checks and record keeping are not formalised.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

**Art and design** and **music** were inspected in depth and **drama** was sampled. In the **drama lessons** sampled it was clear that teachers had good subject knowledge and students were generally working and achieving well, particularly in Years 10 –11 when they have chosen the course. GCSE results are above the national average and drama makes a valuable contribution to the curriculum through the spiritual and moral development of the students. It gives them opportunities to take responsibility. There are opportunities outside lessons for students to be involved in performances involving music and dance as well as drama. The stage management course in which older students teach younger students is linked to the school production.

### Art and design

Provision in art and design is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8, 9	Years 10, 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant number of students do not achieve as well as they could
- Improved strategies, that guide students' understanding of how to improve their work, have recently been introduced
- Teachers are very skilled at managing students' challenging behaviour
- Students have good attitudes, are keen to learn but have weak independent learning skills
- Teachers have good specialist knowledge
- There is an accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses underpinned by a determination to improve

### Commentary

115. Teacher assessments in 2004 show standards at the end of Year 9 to be below expected levels for students' ages. Performance by girls was better than boys, as is the case nationally. Standards are well below average in GCSE examinations. Results have declined in recent years.
116. Standards seen in the inspection were below expectation and achievement was broadly satisfactory. In the longer term however achievement has been erratic and the progress made in younger age classes has not been maintained and built upon, year by year. The quality and presentation of work in sketchbooks in Years 7 to 9 is weak. In some cases poor attendance hampers achievement and in others, higher-attaining students do not demonstrate the standards they are clearly capable of achieving.
117. Teaching was satisfactory overall although generally stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in younger classes. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which in several lessons was used to very good effect, for example in a Year 10 ceramics lesson to demonstrate hand-

building techniques and in a class discussion where Year 9 students compared and contrasted paintings by Dali and Magritte. Teachers have high expectations for behaviour and students generally work hard. The school makes a lot of information available to teachers, about students' past performance and likely attainment. To date, not enough use has been made of this, either by students to review their performance and work towards their personal targets, or by teachers to plan tasks that are matched to individual learning needs. Some higher-attaining students are not set work that enables them to demonstrate the higher levels and grades they are capable of. Currently, although this is set to change, students do not have a clear idea of their performance or what they can do to improve it.

118. This department has, in the recent past, been held back by unavoidable changes of staff and a fire that destroyed students' work and subject resources. It is, however, now able to move forward. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Rooms and resources are conscientiously and effectively managed. Strengths and weaknesses in the subject have been accurately analysed. The steps taken very recently to illustrate National Curriculum expectations and examination grades with examples of written and practical work, demonstrate to students what they can do to improve their performance. Displays support their understanding very well. ICT is underdeveloped in all years, but ceramics is a strength.

### Music

Provision in music is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8, 9	Years 10, 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 are below expectation
- GCSE students are encouraged to develop their individual musical strengths and interests
- A good range of extra-curricular activities is offered and collaboration with drama leads to successful stage productions
- Planning in Years 7 to 9 does not ensure that each lesson has an aim that promotes good achievement within the lesson, as well as within the context of an extended topic

### Commentary

119. In 2003, results in music were above average for grades A\* to C although no student gained an A\* or A grade. Results for 2004 suggest that results were about average. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that students' attainment was average in 2004, but current standards in Year 9 suggest that this was an overestimate.
120. Current standards in Year 11 are in line with course expectations and students' achievement is appropriate to their abilities. Students' performing skills range from well above expectation to well below, because the school does not impose a minimum standard for taking music. Students have good opportunities to develop their strengths and interests. Some students have accomplished guitar skills and improvise fluently. Most have some knowledge of staves and chords but lower-attaining students play only melodies on keyboards. Composing shows a good understanding of form and simple harmony, but melodies tend to be angular and repetitive. In Year 9, standards are below course expectation and students' achievement is unsatisfactory. Their understanding of rhythm, pulse and pitch is rudimentary, which leads to

composing and performing that are below average, and their knowledge of musical terms is below expectation.

121. Teaching is satisfactory overall, though some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm well and sometimes use their musical skills very effectively for demonstration. Individual assistance is well targeted and enhances students' achievement, particularly in the GCSE groups. In Years 7 to 9, planning does not provide specifically for students at different levels of attainment, and this restricts the standards achieved by the more gifted students. Learning is satisfactory overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11, where they are encouraged to develop their own musical strengths and interests. Sometimes, in Years 7 to 9, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. Occasionally too much emphasis is placed on fun and not enough on accomplishment, and this leads to unsatisfactory learning. Assessment tends to be over-generous and is unsatisfactory in Year 7 to 9. Marking does not tell students clearly how to improve.
122. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 covers statutory requirements, but is being revised. At present, extended topics are covered and individual lessons are not always sufficiently well designed to provide students with genuine musical experiences and a sense of satisfaction. Instrumental tuition is well organised and an extended programme of appropriate extra-curricular activities is planned for this term. Regular collaboration with the drama department leads to regular staged musical productions, which are spoken of enthusiastically by the participants. Regular monitoring of teaching takes place but the department lacks a clear knowledge of the standards that should be achieved by the end of Year 9.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is good.

	Years 7, 8, 9	Years 10,11
Standards	Average	Average (GCSE average)
Achievement	Good	Good (GCSE good)
Teaching and learning	Good	Good (GCSE good)
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well by the end of Years 9 and 11 in the compulsory course and by the end of Year 11 GCSE course as a result of good quality teaching and learning
- Very good leadership provides a purposeful focus, ethos and direction for the subject
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of students results in a very positive atmosphere in lessons and extra-curricular activities
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support students' learning in both the compulsory and examination courses
- Very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year extends students' learning experiences and personal development

### Commentary

123. The proportion of students attaining A\* to C grade passes in the GCSE course has been below average over the past three years. Compared to many other subjects, students performed well. Target grades for the current Year 11 group suggest an improved pass rate similar to the national average. Students are achieving well in both their theory and practical

lessons. They are developing their knowledge and understanding well, for example, of anatomy and physiology and different types of training programmes.

124. Standards in Year 9 are average. The majority achieves well in relation to their below average capabilities on entry. In basketball, for example, boys are developing their skills well and show a secure understanding of the use and application of the 'triple threat' stance. Individual hockey skills are secure for both boys and girls and the more capable apply these well in small-sided games. Standards in the Year 11 compulsory course are average. Most students achieve well and have continued to build on the skills and techniques learned in Years 7 to 9. Across all years, students have developed well their understanding of the principles and procedures for warm up but on occasion, the quality of their exercises is variable.
125. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a very good command of the activities being taught and have a very consistent approach to behaviour and discipline. Lessons are well structured, purposeful. They build on what students know and challenge them to improve. In a Year 9 rugby union lesson and a Year 11 girls' hockey lesson, well planned and structured activities ensured students were all actively involved and improving their skills and techniques very well. Learning objectives are made clear at the start of lessons so that students know what is expected of them. Attitudes and behaviour are very good and students work very well together as pairs and small groups. They clearly respect the ethos within which the subject is taught, which enhances the quality of learning and promotes a very good atmosphere in lessons.
126. Teachers use questioning very effectively to enhance students' speaking and listening skills and gauge their level of understanding. Teachers circulate very well in lessons and their effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes students well aware of their capabilities. There are, though, occasions when there could be more student evaluation of each other's work which would help them refine and develop their own practice and deepen their knowledge and understanding even further. Although the department use some ICT to deliver the GCSE course, in general, not enough use is made of it to support all students' learning in the subject. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 focuses very well on the four strands of the PE National Curriculum and good quality marking of students' GCSE theory work ensures they know what they have to do to make further improvements. Assessment procedures for the compulsory course in Years 10 and 11 are less well developed.
127. Very good leadership provides a strong team ethos and a shared commitment for improvement. Management is good. New procedures for monitoring and evaluation have been introduced but are not yet fully embedded. Students experience a wide range of activities and a very good range of extra-curricular provision throughout the year extends students' learning further. These include both recreational and competitive fixtures as well as the provision of elite clubs to further extend and challenge talented students. As a result, a number of students have attained representative honours at district, county and national levels and two students at international level. The department has excellent links with the local recreation centre and uses a number of qualified outside coaches to help broaden students' learning experiences even further, for example, in non-traditional activities.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

The school offers a wide range of good vocational courses which are giving students good insight into the requirements of the workplace as well as teaching them more specific skills. In all the vocational classes seen, students were being given, and were taking, considerable responsibility for their own learning and progress. Relationships were warm and supportive. The main focus of the inspection was the **GNVQ on-line science** course which is reported in science subject report. Most other subjects and courses were sampled. In the **leisure and tourism** lesson sampled students were achieving well as a result of good teaching. They learnt well because the work was interesting and the teaching methods suited their needs. A particular strength is that students are treated as adults and given responsibility for their own progress, which they appreciate. City and guilds courses are provided in catering, construction and hairdressing. In the **construction** lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was sound. Students are acquiring an appropriate range of knowledge and skills and are enthusiastic about the course. They were attentive and fully

involved. In the **hairstyling** lesson sampled, students responded well, worked hard and made good progress in understanding the processes involved in colouring hair. Their portfolios showed a good range of work and some real creativity. Students were keen to talk about their success in competitions. In the **catering** lesson, the teaching particularly emphasised the need for a professional approach and the importance of good presentation of the finished product. Students were also very involved in the lesson, particularly in the practical work, which they clearly enjoyed.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in **personal, social and health education** is good. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of the provision in **citizenship**.

PSHE	Years 7, 8, 9	Years 10, 11
Standards	Good	Good
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have access to a good range of activities which support their personal development
- The PSHE programme is well-structured and systematic
- Older students make an important contribution to work with younger classes
- Teaching and learning are good
- Provision for citizenship is not made clear enough in different subjects

### Commentary

128. The programme for PSHE provides good opportunities for teaching on a wide range of topics including relationships, drugs, health and sex education. In addition to the taught programme, a wide range of opportunities make a good contribution to students' personal development. As students move through the school they develop knowledge and understanding about social issues and helping the local and wider communities. Students help with reading in a local school, raise money for charities, and develop understanding about the ways in which they, and others, can help to improve the quality of life. The teaching and learning seen were good and in some lessons very good. The training and use of volunteer students to deliver modules on drugs is very effective because it enables the students to develop their own skills and they provide good role models for the younger students. The opportunities for role-play within the course are also effective in developing younger students' confidence and understanding of relationships. PSHE is well led and managed and centrally planned programmes of work effectively support the form tutors.

### Citizenship

129. Citizenship is taught within the PSHE programme and National Curriculum subjects, in particular English, and the humanities. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of the provision because citizenship topics were not the main the focus for PSHE during the inspection. Good examples of citizenship were seen in some lessons but subject staff did not explicitly identify these to the students. The wide range of school initiatives gives students opportunities to experience citizenship in other ways. They are introduced to ideas about democracy and responsibility through the year and school councils which give students an important voice in the school, Visits such as those to Luton Crown Courts, help develop their understanding of other aspects of society.
130. Citizenship is being led and managed well. Action plans to improve the subject and emphasise its importance in the students' development are clear and being implemented. Citizenship across the curriculum is well planned. A detailed audit for 2004-2005 shows where components of the subject are taught and this indicates that statutory requirements are being met. A formal system of assessment is being introduced this academic year with the introduction of a portfolio of work and through the use of student planners. The school is aware of the need to monitor implementation more systematically. Citizenship has been reported to parents as required.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Grade
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Students' achievement	4
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well students learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for students	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2
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	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the head teacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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