

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **NIDDERDALE HIGH SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Pateley Bridge, Harrogate

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121700

Headteacher: Mr S Mason

Lead inspector: Ross Maden

Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 November 2004

Inspection number: 268426

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	461
School address:	Low Wath Road Pateley Bridge Harrogate North Yorkshire
Postcode:	HG3 5HL
Telephone number:	01423 711246
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss S Reid
Date of previous inspection:	19 April 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Nidderdale High School and Community College is a smaller than average sized high school with 461 students on roll. There are 105 students with special educational needs, which is above the national average. The percentage of students with statements of special educational needs is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils whose mother tongue is not English is very low and no students are at the early stage of learning English. There are five per cent of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. The percentage of households with children in high social class households is above the national average. Overall, the pupils' attainment on entry to the school is in line with the national average. There are only 13 students who joined the school other than at the usual time of admission. The school became a specialist college for science and visual arts in September 2004 and gained a Schools Achievement Award in 2000. The school achieved the Sportsmark Award in 2000 and the local education authority's special educational needs (SEN) quality mark in 2003, along with the North Yorkshire Business Education Partnership work experience quality mark award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31718	Denise Shields	Lay inspector	
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern foreign languages
32330	Ann Behan	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology
33171	Thomas Clark	Team inspector	English
14704	Jeffrey Cooling	Team inspector	Geography
15312	Kay Lord	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education
19015	Gordon Peacock	Team inspector	Science
24894	Clive Petts	Team inspector	Design and technology Work related learning
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the school is good.** The standards achieved by students when compared to national standards are above average and have improved over time. In relation to students' prior attainment most students achieve well. The quality of education is good, as are teaching and learning. The leadership of the school is good and the leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. The management of the school is satisfactory. Most parents are very supportive of the school, as are most students. There is a very strong ethos within the school that is reflected in the high quality of relationships between adults and students, which enables all students to feel valued within the school. The school provides good value for money. The school is an increasingly popular one for parents to send their children to.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well in most subjects because teaching is good.
- Students' social and moral development is very good and results in very good attitudes and behaviour.
- The quality of teaching is good as a result of enthusiastic and hard working staff.
- Links with the community and businesses are very good.
- There are weaknesses in the construction of the annual timetable, especially for Year 10 and 11 students.
- Tasks set in lessons do not always fully meet the needs of higher and lower attaining students and assessment data is not used effectively to identify how students can improve their work.
- There are weaknesses in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning across many subjects.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards in the national tests for English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 have improved. The proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades A\*-C has increased. In tackling the key issues identified in the previous report the school has made good progress. Much progress has been made in improving boys' standards of behaviour and attainment and these are no longer issues. There have been improvements in the accommodation since the last inspection and in the co-ordination of students' spiritual development. The number of students at the school has increased significantly since the last inspection.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Standards of students' work seen in the inspection are above average in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. **Students achieve well throughout their time in the school**, given their attainment when they enter the school. Most students make good progress because they have very positive attitudes to learning, are very well behaved and well taught. Language and literacy skills are good but students' standards of writing in Years 7 and 8 are less secure. Their competence in mathematics and ICT is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs achieve well because of good support. There is limited additional provision for gifted and talented students and on odd occasions in lessons there are missed opportunities to fully stretch higher attaining students. However, in 2004 18 per cent of the total GCSE grades were at A\* or A which is slightly higher than the national figure.

Students attain above average standards in English and mathematics in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 – in science standards are well above. In relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9, students' results at GCSE are above average for those gaining five GCSE grades A\*-C and well above average for those gaining five GCSE grades A\*-G. Results in design and technology, French and history were significantly stronger than results in other subjects. Standards in physical education are below average.

**The school provides very good opportunities for students' moral and social development; their spiritual development is good, whilst cultural development is satisfactory.** As a result, students' behaviour and their attitudes to school are very good. Attendance and punctuality are good. Attendance is higher now than at the time of the previous inspection and is above that found in most schools.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Overall teaching and learning are good** but are stronger in Years 9 to 11 than they are in Years 7 and 8. The high quality of relationships between students and their teachers contributes to effective learning and the very good ethos. The headteacher plays a key role in sustaining a friendly atmosphere in which all staff and students feel valued. There is a weakness in several subjects, in setting tasks which fully meet the needs of higher and lower attaining students. There is a limited use made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Assessment data is not always used effectively to identify how students can improve their work. There is a good range of extra activities outside lessons that enrich students' experience. The school pays good attention to the welfare of students and the guidance they receive is effective in promoting learning. There are effective links with parents and with other schools and colleges. There are very good links with the community. The school responds very well to and acts on students' views.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good**, as is the governance of the school. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. The effectiveness of management is satisfactory. The headteacher is an excellent role model in showing respect for students. The school improvement plan provides a very good basis for raising standards even higher. Financial controls are good as is the day-to-day administration, which ensures the school runs smoothly. There are weaknesses in the construction of the school's annual timetable.

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

Many parents replied to the parental questionnaire in advance of the inspection. Most of the replies were very positive about the school. A minority of parents expressed concerns about homework and being kept well informed about their child's progress. Inspectors judge that homework is satisfactory and that improvements could be made to the reports parents' receive.

All students completed a questionnaire giving inspectors their views on the school. Most replies were very positive. There was some concern about behaviour and homework. The inspectors did not share their concerns about behaviour in the school, judging that behaviour was very good.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve the quality of timetabling by:
  - ensuring that the timetable is prepared to allow sufficient time before the end of the summer term for teachers to plan their courses for the following year;
  - constructing the timetable for Years 10 and 11 to provide a greater variety in the subjects students study on each day of the week and reduce the occasions when subjects are timetabled more than once on each day.
- Increase:
  - the use of assessment data to identify how students can improve their work;
  - the use of assessment data to ensure that all students are fully challenged in lessons.



- Ensure that tasks set in lessons fully meet the needs of higher and lower attaining students.
- Ensure there is a consistent use by all teachers of ICT to support teaching and learning across all subjects.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the governors' annual report to parents contains the necessary information.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Standards of work are above average in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Students achieve well throughout their time in the school, given their attainment when they enter the school. Language and literacy skills are good. Students' competence in mathematics and ICT is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as their peers. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress.

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

- Students attain above average standards in English and mathematics in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 – in science standards are well above.
- Most students make good progress because they have positive attitudes to learning, are well behaved and well taught.
- In relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9, students' results at GCSE are above average for those gaining five GCSE grades A\*-C and well above average for those gaining five GCSE grades A\*-G.
- Results in design and technology, French and history are significantly stronger than results in other subjects.
- Standards of literacy are above average but there are weaknesses in the standards of writing in Years 7 and 8.
- Standards in physical education are below average.

#### **Commentary**

1. The standard of students' work when they joined the school in Year 7 is broadly in line with the national average, although it has varied over the last few years. For example, students in the current Years 8 and 9 joined with standards that were above the national average and were higher than those in the current Years 10 and 11, which explains the dip in national test results in 2003 and 2004. Standards of attainment in the 2003 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were well above the national average for science and above for English and mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, based on students' prior attainment, results for English and mathematics were above average and the results for science placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. This represents good achievement for these students. The trend of improvement has remained above the national trend. Results for 2004 show a dip in all three subjects over the school's 2003 results. This is a reflection that the standards on entry for these students were on average lower than for other students in the school.
2. Standards seen in many lessons were above average in Years 7 to 9. As students enter the school with standards that are in line with the national average, while by the end of Year 9 standards are above average, this indicates that students are achieving well. The major factors for this are the positive attitudes students have in lessons and because they are well taught.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.8 (34.5)	(33.4)

mathematics	36.0 (36.6)	(35.4)
science	33.1 (36.6)	(33.6)

*There were 93 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. In individual subjects, by the end of Year 9 the standards of students' work are above average for the majority of subjects. The exceptions are that standards are satisfactory in geography, ICT and citizenship, and below average in physical education. Many students in physical education lessons lacked the basic skills to provide the building blocks for further learning and occasionally there was a lack of challenge to extend the skills of the higher attaining students and to help lower attaining students to master the basics.
4. For each of the last two years the school has met its targets for the proportion of students reaching level 5 and above in English, mathematics and science. The school is on course to meet the challenging targets set for 2005.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	55 (59)	53 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (95)	86 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.2 (37.2)	(34.8)

*There were 72 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A\*-C was above average in 2003. The provisional results for 2004 show a dip in the proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades A\*-C compared with the results in 2003. However, when comparing the performance of students in 2003 with their prior attainment at the end of Year 9, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades A\*-G was well above average. The proportion gaining five GCSE grades A\*-C and one A\*-G were above average when compared to similar schools. The average point score per student is above the national average, as it is when compared to similar schools.
6. In the analysis of individual subjects in the 2003 GCSE examinations all subjects, except geography, show results in excess of the respective national average. However, the results for design and technology, French and history were significantly stronger than results in other subjects. Initial analysis by the LEA of the 2004 results shows that students' performance in French, history, German, chemistry, biology, art and design, English, English literature, food, textiles and resistant materials were relatively stronger than their performance in other subjects.
7. In 2004 the school did not meet its unrealistic published targets for the proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades A\*-C and average points score but it did meet its target for the proportion of students gaining one GCSE grade A\*-G. The trend in the school's average points score is below the national trend. Results for the period 2002-2004 are below the results achieved in the period 1999-2001 but based on their prior attainment students have achieved well in GCSE examinations over the last three years.

8. Standards in lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 reflect the standards of recent examination results. Standards were well above average in design and technology and history. For all other subjects standards are above average except for citizenship, geography and ICT where standards are average and in physical education where standards are below average. In relation to their prior attainment most students are achieving very highly in history because they are well taught. They are achieving well in all other subjects except for mathematics, ICT, geography and citizenship where achievement is satisfactory. Students are not achieving well in many aspects of physical education; for example, in badminton lessons students lacked control, accuracy and consistency in their play.
9. Overall most students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Relative to the national performance of boys and girls there is no significant difference. Girls do outperform boys but the gap is in line with the national difference. There is limited additional provision for gifted and talented students and on odd occasions in lessons there are missed opportunities to fully stretch higher attaining students. However, in 2004 18 per cent of the total GCSE grades were at A\* or A which is slightly higher than the national figure.
10. Students with special educational needs make good progress. They make good gains in their reading and spelling ages, with an average of 18 months progress in one year. They do better than expected in their GCSE examinations, and almost all gain at least five passes, sometimes at the higher grades of A\*-C. Students with statements of special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set at their annual reviews. These include educational, social and behavioural targets. Currently there are no students with English as an additional language requiring extra support.
11. Standards in speaking and listening and reading skills, are above average. There are some weaknesses in writing in Years 7 and 8, where lower attaining students, in particular, tend only to use simple sentences and to rely quite heavily on the use of colloquial expressions. By Year 9 the standard of written work is much improved and most students write fluently and accurately. Standards of written work in Years 10 and 11 are good. Girls' standards are slightly above those of boys, reflecting the national trend.
12. Key words are displayed in most classrooms, especially in English, mathematics, history and ICT. Corridors display a wide range of written material, especially outside the English and French rooms. In many curricular areas, notably in art and design, English, design and technology and science, the teaching encourages the development of speaking and listening skills. In music, good use is made of questioning. In history, extended reading regularly takes place. The school does have a literacy policy, and the subject leader for English provides training for other subject leaders on how the policy should be implemented and the policy is well monitored and evaluated.
13. Students enter the school with attainment in mathematics which is in line with the national average. Students in Year 9 are attaining above the national average. This represents good achievement for students of all levels of attainment, including those students with special educational needs. Students in Year 11 are attaining above the national average. Students in Years 10 and 11 are achieving at a satisfactory level. A numeracy policy is in place, and opportunities for students to practise mathematical skills are identified in some faculty schemes of work. However, these opportunities are not consistently applied.
14. Students' attainments for ICT are in line with national averages and students of all backgrounds and levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. There is inconsistent use of ICT across the subjects of the curriculum to improve students' learning. Students use word processing to present coursework, and the Internet to research topics, in most subject areas. Electronic whiteboards are used effectively

to present information to pupils in ICT and mathematics. However, although the resources have improved since the last inspection, there are insufficient to ensure all subjects have easy access to facilities.

15. Since the last inspection the proportion of students reaching level 5 and above in English, mathematics and science in the National Curriculum tests has increased. The pattern of improvement at GCSE is less obvious, with 55 per cent of students gaining five GCSE grades A\*-C in 2004 compared with 54 per cent in 1999.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students' behaviour and their attitudes to school are very good. The school provides very good opportunities for students' moral and social development; their spiritual development is good, whilst cultural development is satisfactory. Students' attendance and punctuality are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships between adults and students are very good and, as a result, almost all students enjoy learning.
- The school's alternative curriculum arrangements help students who have become less interested in school life to make good gains in their learning.
- There are missed opportunities to prepare students effectively for living in a multicultural society.

### **Commentary**

16. Students feel that this is a good school to attend. They state that they enjoy almost all of their lessons and the activities offered both at lunchtime and after school. Very secure relationships between adults and students are a key feature of the school. All students completed a questionnaire giving inspectors their views on the school. Most replies were very positive. A student in Year 9 comments 'people are dealt with in a fair way and everyone is treated equally and with respect.'
17. In lessons, almost all students, including those with special educational needs and those who sometimes have difficulty controlling their behaviour, usually try hard and concentrate very well. This has a positive impact on how well they achieve. Students' attitudes are at their best when lessons proceed at a brisk pace and activities are challenging. However, some students can be easily distracted if teaching does not engage them fully. Most students work well together in small groups and pairs, they often advise each other how to perform the task or skill. The provision of the work related and personal study course (WRAPS) has a positive impact on students' attitudes to work and ultimately their achievement. Whilst almost all students show very good attitudes to their work and behave very well, the school has made successful arrangements for the very small minority who do not.
18. Although a minority of students raised concerns about behaviour and bullying and also felt that they were not treated with respect, inspection findings do not support this view. Almost all students behave very well in lessons; this contributes positively to the standards they achieve because they are able to get on with their work. Where behaviour is only satisfactory in lessons this is for two main reasons. These are when teaching does not always sufficiently engage students in learning and they become restless, and the second is, when despite the teachers' best efforts to manage them, an extremely small minority of boys present challenging behaviour.
19. At lunchtime, behaviour in the small dining hall is usually very good. When moving around the school, even in the narrow corridors, and at the start and end of the school day, students show very good levels of self-discipline. The vast majority of students are very polite, friendly and helpful. Discussions with students indicate that most instances of bullying are name-calling that gets out of hand, but they state that these are very few in number. They acknowledge that, when told, the school takes the matter seriously and acts quickly to resolve the incident.
20. The attitudes and behaviour of students with special educational needs are very good. In the small withdrawal groups, attitudes to learning are particularly positive, and students show a very good understanding and appreciation of the help and advice they receive, and they try very hard to succeed as a result.

21. The overall quality of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students develop a very strong moral sense. They show respect for each other, each other's property and the environment in which they work. Moral development is particularly well supported in assemblies and in history lessons, where moral issues are regularly discussed. In one assembly, for example, Year 11 students were asked to consider a series of moral dilemmas and then given time to reflect on them. Moral development is further enhanced because staff treat children with respect and provide very good role models.
22. Students' social development is also very good. The school is a very harmonious community and in almost all lessons students co-operate and support each other very well. Students have good opportunities to work together through a varied programme of visits and extra-curricular activities; to take responsibility, for example, when Year 11 students act as mentors for younger children; and to take part in decision-making in a democratic society through the very effective student council.
23. Students' spiritual development is good. Students have an inherent respect for each other and, therefore, for the values and beliefs that other students hold. However, the support for students' spiritual development has strengths and weaknesses. There is a 'thought for the day' either in tutor time or assemblies. Assemblies are effective because they allow students time to reflect on spiritual matters, but there is no formal monitoring of the effectiveness of what happens in tutor time, and the quality of students' experience is variable. Spiritual development is well supported in subjects such as history and art and design but elsewhere opportunities are lost to reflect on the spiritual dimension. Curriculum support for spiritual development is not effectively co-ordinated across the curriculum.
24. Cultural development is satisfactory. In a school where there is little cultural diversity, some subjects are making efforts to introduce students to different cultural traditions. In religious education, for example, students learn about the major religions of the world; in English they study poetry from other cultures; in modern languages they have the opportunity to spend time abroad. However, there is no whole-school approach to multicultural education and, as a result, opportunities to prepare pupils for living in a multicultural society are missed. For example, in subjects such as art and design and music the school has plans for links with a school in Bradford as part of its specialist school plans but these have not yet been put into practice. The school has begun to introduce multicultural events, for example when it had Japanese visitors in school, but these are too infrequent.

## Attendance

Arrangements to monitor and promote attendance are good. Attendance is higher now than at the time of the previous inspection and is above that found in most schools. Most students arrive at school in time.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (94.1%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.8	School data	0.1
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

## Exclusions

### Ethnic background of pupils

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	451	18	1
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

In the year prior to the inspection there were 18 fixed term and one permanent exclusion. The school does not take the decision to exclude any student lightly and provides very good support to help them both before and on their return to school.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum and assessment are satisfactory. The out-of-school activities are good. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are good. There are satisfactory arrangements for students' care, welfare, health and safety. The support, advice and guidance for pupils are good. There are effective links with parents and with other schools and colleges. There are very good links with the community. The school responds very well and acts on students' views.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 to 11. However, teaching is better with older pupils. Assessment is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are stronger in Years 9 to 11 than they are in Years 7 and 8.
- The high quality of relationships between students and their teachers contributes to effective learning.
- There is a weakness in several subjects in setting tasks which fully meet the needs of higher and lower attaining students.
- There is a limited use made of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Assessment data is not always used effectively to identify how students can improve their work.

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 101 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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1 (1%)	30 (30%)	41 (40%)	26 (26%)	3 (3%)	0	0
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*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.*

25. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teaching and learning are stronger in Years 9, 10 and 11 than they are in Years 7 and 8. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is very good in design and technology, history and music. In all other subjects, teaching is good, except for mathematics, geography, physical education and citizenship, where it is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is very good in design and technology and history. In all other subjects teaching is good except for citizenship, physical education and geography, where it is satisfactory.
26. One of the major strengths in teaching across many subjects is the high quality of relationships between students and teachers. Most teachers provide encouragement and give students confidence to tackle their work effectively. The high quality of relationships results in students having very positive attitudes towards their learning and contributes to effective learning taking place in lessons. There is also a very good pace to learning when teachers have high expectations for students. This is particularly evident in history, art and design and design and technology lessons.
27. The management of students' behaviour is good and it is rare to see teaching or learning time lost because of time spent in managing challenging behaviour.
28. The variety of teaching tasks set for students is satisfactory. It is a weakness in some science, geography and physical education lessons. A feature of several lessons, which were otherwise satisfactory, is for students to be over reliant on teachers and for teachers to rely mainly on whole-class teaching. However, when students are given the opportunity to work in pairs, or small groups, they stay on task and can give clear feedback to the class, as was evident in a Year 10 lesson on child abuse. As a result of being well taught many students have well-developed skills in working independently.
29. In several English, mathematics, science and physical education lessons there are weaknesses in setting tasks, which fully meet students' needs. This is evident in Years 7 and 8 and in classes where there is a wide range of ability. There is a lack in the use of assessment data to ensure that the tasks set fully stretch both higher and lower attaining students.
30. In mathematics and music, teachers make very good use of technology to support their teaching. This is not consistent across the school and not all teachers are using ICT to support teaching. The lack of resources restricts many teachers from using ICT to effectively support students' learning. The school recognises the issue over the level of ICT resources and has targeted additional funds in the current financial year to tackle this issue.
31. Several students and parents raised concerns about homework. The inspectors' judgements are that homework is satisfactory, with most teachers setting appropriate tasks to extend and reinforce what has been learnt in lessons.
32. The teaching of literacy skills is good and, as a result, standards are above average. Key words are displayed in most classrooms, especially in English, mathematics, history and ICT. Corridors display a wide range of written material, especially outside the English and French rooms. In many curricular areas, notably in art and design, English, design and technology and science, the teaching encourages the development of speaking and listening skills. In music, good use is made of questioning. In history, extended reading regularly takes place. The school does have a literacy policy, and the subject leader for English provides training for other subject leaders on how the policy should be implemented. Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors are generally corrected, although not consistently across all subjects.
33. A numeracy policy is in place, and opportunities for students to practise mathematical skills are identified in some schemes of work. However, these opportunities are not consistently applied. There are occasional good opportunities for students to use number skills in some

subjects. In ICT students use spreadsheets and formulae to produce graphs; in science students perform calculations for various measurements, and use formulae and graphs to solve practical problems. In design and technology, students measure distance and angles, and weigh ingredients, and in geography students present data from surveys and investigations graphically.

34. The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants know students well, and often give effective support that helps them to concentrate. Teaching in withdrawal groups is good and relationships are particularly strong. In the best lessons, methods are active and varied; there is a very brisk pace, and very good relationships between students and staff. As a result, pupils try very hard to succeed, and very good learning is the result. However, in a small number of lessons, work is not well enough matched to each individual student, and too many are given exactly the same work to do. In these lessons, learning is restricted to a level that is at best, satisfactory.
35. The arrangements for marking and assessing students' work are satisfactory. Work is marked regularly and standards and achievement are routinely reported to parents. There is a clear whole-school policy, which is currently under review, as parts of it do not provide an effective framework for all subjects in assessing standards as measured by National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9. There are good procedures for collecting information on students' capabilities as they enter the school and settle into Year 7. Target minimum grades are identified from this information and distributed to all subjects. At the end of Year 7 assessments are used to create teaching groups or sets for Year 8. By the end of Year 9 results from national tests and teacher assessments provide further information that assists decisions as to which courses and examinations are to be taken in Years 10 and 11. Following GCSE examinations, the school carries out a detailed analysis of results and performance is reviewed to celebrate achievement and to identify actions to be built into improvement planning. The school receives very good support from the LEA with systems for managing assessment data.
36. At individual subject level and classroom level practice is inconsistent. The available information is not always used fully to inform teaching and learning strategies and in planning work for students of different levels of ability. Assessment data is not always used effectively to identify how students can improve their work and, overall, students are insufficiently aware of the level they are working at. Assessment arrangements are very good in design and technology and music, good in English, science and history and satisfactory in all other subjects, except geography and physical education. Where arrangements are good or better, not only are requirements met but also there is provision to develop students' capacity for self-assessment so that they have a sharper understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their work and are therefore more able to achieve their targets.
37. The school has identified in the school improvement plan the need to strengthen this aspect of its work. With vision and clear direction from the assistant headteacher actions are now in place to enhance teaching and learning by making consistent and effective use of student assessment information.
38. The good standard of teaching at the time of the last inspection has been maintained. However, teaching and learning were better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 at the time of the last inspection. This has now been reversed, with better teaching and learning in Years 9 to 11 than in Years 7 and 8. Since the last inspection much work has been undertaken to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This mirrors the priorities of the school's improvement plan and the focus on teaching and learning which is seen in the impact the new assistant headteacher has made in a relatively short space of time.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory. Opportunities to enrich the curriculum, including out-of-school activities, are good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactorily broad and balanced, with some concerns about the range of activities offered in design and technology.
- There is a good range of lunchtime and after school activities, except for music.
- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory but needs to be more balanced.
- Vocational subjects are not available for all students.
- Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, but rooms are small and restrictive for many subjects.

### **Commentary**

39. The curriculum provides students in Years 7 to 9 with a satisfactory programme that is broad and balanced and matches their needs and aspirations. For students in Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is less satisfactory, mainly as a result of the timetabling of lessons. Since the last inspection the school has become a specialist college for science and the visual arts and in these subjects there is some encouraging development of an innovative curriculum which reflects the school's specialisms. A new Work Related and Personal Support Course (WRAPS) has been introduced for lower attaining students, which is proving to be popular.
40. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 meets statutory requirements. Courses are taught in the core subjects of mathematics, English, science and technology, together with French, music, history, geography, information and communication technology, art, physical education, personal, social, health and citizenship education, and religious education. Three quarters of Year 8 students follow a course in German. This allows for a greater choice of languages in Years 10 and 11. Although the curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 the provision in design and technology in Years 7 to 9 is too narrow, as there is no systematic coverage for computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture.
41. In Year 10 there has been a major change in the organisation of courses and options. All students take the core GCSE subjects of English, mathematics, science and design and technology (food, textiles or resistant materials). For higher and average attaining students there are further choices of GCSE subjects. However, there are no vocational courses for these students to follow. Higher attaining students wishing to pursue science courses post-16 are recommended to choose the science option that enables them to take examinations in the three separate sciences (biology, physics and chemistry). The school has also developed new courses in applied science and ICT at GCSE. There are weaknesses in the timetabling for several subjects in Years 10 and 11, which result in students having to take two or more lessons in the same subject on the same day. The recent changes in the choice of options available have had a detrimental effect on certain subjects.
42. Lower attaining students are encouraged to follow the new Work Related and Personal Support Course (WRAPS). This course enables students to enhance their study of the core subjects, whilst having the opportunity to spend more time on work placements and taking work-related qualifications. WRAPS has proved very popular and more students in the school would like to have the opportunity to sample some of its innovative new programmes. Good links have been made with local colleges and businesses which help prepare students for the later stages of education and employment.

43. Provision for personal, health, social and citizenship education (PHSCE) is satisfactory. There is suitable coverage of drugs awareness and sex education. Careers education and guidance are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Citizenship education is satisfactory. Heads of year are effective in co-ordinating, and planning citizenship courses.
44. Enrichment activities and support for learning outside the school day are good and extensive. The school has extended its programme of lunchtime and after school activities (Nidderdale Assisted Study Activities), which mainly concentrates on providing extension activities and opportunities for further study in GCSE subjects (statistics and extra science for example) alongside more purely recreational clubs and societies. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities in physical education, with badminton, netball, football and hockey teams regularly taking part in local competitions. Overall these activities attract an average of 250 students per week (over 50 per cent of the school). The school presents occasional dramatic productions, although the small size of the hall is a constraint on drama activities in general. Activities in art and design are particularly strong. Professional artists, including a fashion designer and graffiti artist from Japan, have visited the school. There is an Arts Bus which takes students and members of the community to many venues of artistic interest throughout the country. Although 75 students receive instrumental and vocal tuition (at nearly 20 per cent of the school population this is well above national averages), extra-curricular activities in music have reduced significantly since the last inspection. The school is now investigating alternative forms of delivery in terms of music staffing that would make this important aspect of school life available to more students. The school organises students' visits to museums, art galleries, theatres and places of historical and geographical interest and Year 9 students make a regular visit to France. Students support the well-organised charitable activities. These activities make an important contribution to students' intellectual, personal and cultural development.
45. The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is good. They are educated with their peers for the great majority of the time in mainstream classes. When modifications are made, they are well matched to the needs of students. For example, to improve literacy skills, small groups are formed, and there is some effective one-to-one tuition. In addition, the school has recently begun a Prince's Trust Youth Award course, which is very effectively preparing students for future employment or further education. Older students sometimes help younger ones with their organisation and study skills, by acting as mentors, with very positive effects on attitudes to learning. The school makes good use of outside agencies, such as the behavioural support and educational psychology services. In addition, the learning support base creates a positive learning environment, where students work very well.
46. The match of teaching staff to the curriculum is good. Teachers are experienced and well qualified to teach their subjects. Since the last inspection the school has employed additional support staff. The retention and recruitment of staff is not a major problem but, as student numbers have increased, it has been necessary to employ more part-time staff, and this has had an impact on the timetabling arrangements, which are less than ideal as a consequence.
47. The provision of resources is satisfactory and improvements to the provision of ICT equipment have been made since the last inspection. The provision of further computers and interactive whiteboards in teaching rooms is an area for development – an issue which is recognised by the school. The well-stocked library, which is much used and appreciated by students, is an excellent resource but is too small to meet the demand from students.
48. Accommodation on this intensively used and well-managed site is satisfactory although classrooms are small and restrict the size of teaching groups. The hall is too small to be used for regular whole-school assemblies, and although it is used for productions the lack of a proper room for drama continues to inhibit the development of this subject. Since the last inspection an additional teaching block has been built which has improved the accommodation

for music and mathematics and some humanities subjects, but there are inadequate storage facilities in modern foreign languages and the science department is one laboratory short. The school has a dedicated ICT room and the use of two further ICT rooms in the community building. A new swimming pool is about to open which will be an asset to the school and community.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The school's arrangements for students' care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Students receive good support, advice and guidance. There are very good opportunities for students to be involved in and to influence the school's work.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students receive a high level of sensitive day-to-day pastoral support and guidance.
- Academic guidance is not always sufficiently targeted so that students clearly know what they must do to improve their learning.
- Child protection training is not fully up to date and the school's arrangements to support looked-after students need reviewing.
- The form tutor time is often used effectively to support students' spiritual, moral and social development.
- Students' opinions are regularly sought and their views are valued.

## **Commentary**

49. The school is a caring community. It has recently altered its pastoral support structure in the light of imminent staff changes. The dedicated and caring senior teacher who has overall responsibility for the pastoral care of pupils is retiring imminently. This is now based on a system of heads of year, as well as form tutors. A good start has been made.
50. Form tutors know individuals and their home backgrounds very well. Relationships between students and adults are very secure. On a day-to-day basis the pastoral guidance that all adults who work in the school provide for students is very effective. This provision is effectively supplemented by access to a school nurse and a trained counsellor. Students confirm they feel very well supported during their time at school and are confident there is an adult they can seek guidance from if they are unhappy. The form tutor time, although only brief, is often used well to support students' personal development and to offer them guidance and support, but this is not always the case. Sometimes time is not well spent and students sit and chat, rather than being involved in any suitable activities.
51. There are good arrangements to ensure students' health and safety. There are agreed policies, clear practice and procedures that extend to all aspects of school life. The governing body plays an appropriate role in overseeing this aspect of the school's work. Nevertheless, a small number of health and safety concerns were identified during the inspection and the school has effectively responded to these. Arrangements to deal with students' medical needs or those who become unwell whilst at school are very good. Issues linked to child protection and any 'looked-after' students are sensitively dealt with and there is good liaison with any external agencies that may be involved in the care of these students. However, there is a need to ensure that all adults who work in the school have received suitable training that gives them an oversight of child protection procedures. Arrangements to support any students who are fostered or in public care need to be formalised. There are good arrangements to ensure that students new to the school are well supported when they start. Of particular note is the involvement of Year 11 students in mentoring those in Year 7; students themselves speak highly of this support.
52. The school's personal, social and health education programme includes good provision for the older students in preparation for the choices to be made when leaving the school ready for

their next stage of education or training. The actual time allocated to the advisor from the Connexions service to work within the school is barely satisfactory. But, because of the additional time that the careers co-ordinator and the Connexions advisor give in their own time, students are well prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment.

53. Whilst day-to-day pastoral guidance is very effective, academic guidance is satisfactory. Students state confidently that they can ask their teachers for help during lessons. But, from discussions with students it is clear that they do not understand the link, if any, between their National Curriculum level and any target grade they have been given. The marking of work does not always consistently and clearly indicate to students how they can improve their work in all subjects. Neither do all subjects set clear specific academic targets for students. Overall there is not always sufficient guidance to help them understand how they can improve their learning.
54. Students indicate that their views are listened to and, where possible, acted upon, not only via the student council but also when they offer suggestions in lessons. The student council is a well-organised and democratic group which represents all tutor groups in the school. As a consequence of suggestions made by the council, alterations have been made to the lunchtime arrangements and they are currently negotiating with the kitchen staff a healthier option choice for lunches. In discussions, students indicate that the council makes a real difference to school life.

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

The school has a good partnership with parents. Links with the community are very good. Liaison with other schools and colleges is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Links with the community and business improve the quality of students' education as well as their personal development.
- Parents hold the school in very high regard.
- Although much of the written information provided for parents is good, progress reports could be better.

### **Commentary**

55. The school is very popular with parents; they say they like its small, friendly atmosphere. Many send their children to the school, even though they live outside the area; as a result the school is over subscribed. Almost all parents are pleased with the progress their children are making. They appreciate the fact the school is very approachable and also the opportunities that are provided for their children. Parents have played a significant part in helping to raise the funds needed to help the school achieve specialist college status; the school appreciates this. Almost all parents support the work their children do at home or activities they take part in after school. They often provide transport facilities to ensure that children can get to and from competitions. Parents of students with special educational needs are invited to attend their children's annual review and almost all do so. Relationships with almost all parents are very good. However, the school does not consult with them on a regular basis so that their views can be taken into account when the governors are planning future areas for improvement.
56. Written information is satisfactory overall. Regular good quality newsletters are produced as well as an extremely informative school brochure. The governors' annual report to parents does not contain all the information it should. This issue was also raised at the time of the previous inspection. The students' progress reports are satisfactory overall. Not all subjects clearly identify individuals' specific strengths and areas for development. There is no standard

format for the report. The inclusion of students' minimum target grade, sometimes alongside National Curriculum levels and test results, is confusing to the reader.

57. The school is at the heart of the local community. Students regularly take part in a wide range of local events such as the Nidderdale Show. The community makes regular use of the school's facilities. Many local businesses offer work experience placements that help to raise students' awareness of the world of work. They also support the school's Industry Day and the end of term activities week. As part of the school's emphasis on science and visual arts, local craftsmen have worked alongside older pupils on specific projects. The immediate locality is used well for residential activities, water sport activities, and visits linked to subjects such as history. All these many experiences make a very strong contribution to students' personal development and standards of achievement.
58. Liaison with other schools is developing rapidly as a result of the school's specialist college status. There are close links and liaison with the sixth forms to which many students transfer. This eases their transition to their next stage of education. The Bridge Project, aimed at developing key skills as part of the WRAPS programme, also helps to strengthen links with other local schools and colleges.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are good as is the governance of the school. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. The effectiveness of management is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher is an excellent role model in showing respect for students, and his influence is a principal contributor to the very good relationships in the school.
- The school improvement plan provides a very good basis for raising standards even higher.
- Financial controls are good as is the day-to-day administration.
- There are weaknesses in the construction of the school's annual timetable, which are negatively affecting the achievement of students.

### **Commentary**

59. The headteacher has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has a clear vision of what is needed to raise standards. He provides very good leadership for the school and this has motivated and influenced staff and students. Among many strengths, he demonstrates on a daily basis his respect for students and provides an excellent role model for other staff to follow. This high level of respect is reciprocated by the students who have the confidence to approach the headteacher to discuss and raise issues. He has a particular expertise in strategic planning and in identifying the changes which are necessary to raise standards even higher. The recent appointment of an assistant headteacher with responsibilities for learning and teaching has strengthened the leadership team and has made a major contribution to strategic planning. The size of the leadership team is appropriate for a school of this size.
60. The very good leadership provided by the headteacher and supported by members of the leadership team, has contributed to raising standards within the school. The leadership team is committed to running an inclusive school, which, in part, is why there are relatively few exclusions. There is also a determination to ensure that the curriculum provided by the school is matched to students' needs, despite the limitations of being a small school.
61. Overall subject and pastoral leadership are good. There is very good leadership for history and design and technology because both leaders are relentless in raising standards. There



are no areas of the curriculum where leadership is judged less than satisfactory. The school has an honest, but occasionally over-critical, commitment to self-evaluation, which is used effectively to produce school improvement plans. Middle managers write effective plans to reflect the school's priorities. There is a weakness at all levels of management in applying a rigorous system for the monitoring and recording of classroom performance, including the monitoring of form tutor time. This is an issue, recognised by the school, which is being

effectively tackled by the recent appointment of an assistant headteacher. In recognition of the importance of this issue, the governing body has restructured its committees so that there is now a major committee for learning and teaching.

62. Management of the provision for students with special educational needs is good. Reviews are conducted efficiently, and parental attendance is very high. Students' files are well organised, so that a clear picture of each individual's progress can be easily seen. Leadership is satisfactory. While the new code of practice is securely in place, and well understood by the staff responsible for learning support, this good practice has not been spread widely enough in the main subject areas. This means that staff understanding and practice is too variable in subjects, and work is not always set at just the right level for individual students. The school has made good progress in promoting disability access, as required by regulations that came into force in 2002, and suitable access has been provided over the whole-school site.
63. Management is satisfactory. The school's policies effectively identify a clear vision for improving the school. Less effective is the consistent implementation of these policies. For example, the school is rich in data on students' performances. Monitoring data provided by the school, the LEA and Ofsted provide a lot of information but this information is not yet being effectively evaluated to identify targets for individuals or groups of students. For example, it is known from testing of students on entry that there is a wide range of abilities and that the average test score varies considerably between one year group and another. However, there is no evidence to indicate that this information has been used to influence the planning of schemes of work or used to ensure that the level of challenge in lessons fully meets students' needs. Whilst the day-to-day administration of the school enables the school to run smoothly, there are some weaknesses in the administration of the timetable. The timetable is produced too late in the school year to enable teachers to plan fully for the following year. The timetable is weak in ensuring that students have a balance of subjects on any one day, which has a detrimental effect on the progress they make. For example, one group in Year 10 have two periods of mathematics and three periods of science on one day and a Year 11 group have two periods of science and two periods mathematics on one day. In Year 11 all students have four periods of mathematics but these are taught on Thursday and Friday.
64. The priorities for improvement identified in the school improvement plan for the current year are appropriate. For each issue there are clear strategies, with identified criteria for success. Appropriate timescales for their completion have been identified. The school day runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.
65. The professional development of staff is satisfactory. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. There are effective arrangements in place for supporting Initial Teacher Training students. Performance management is fully implemented and contributes to the identification of training needs. Performance management and appraisal are properly established.
66. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They work closely and well with the headteacher and senior staff. Governors play a very supportive role in planning for the school's improvement. Governors offer good support and challenge to the school. The governing body is meeting all of its statutory requirements except for the governors' annual report to parents which does not contain all of the required information.

67. The school has maintained the high standards reported in the last inspection report.

## Financial information

### Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,770,727	Balance from previous year	161,675
Total expenditure	1,690,918	Balance carried forward to the next	241,484
Expenditure per pupil	3,668		

68. Financial control is good. The school was audited in October 2004 and the few minor issues identified, in what was otherwise a good report, have been have been effectively tackled.
69. The school is well resourced and this enables class sizes to be smaller than the national average and for teachers to have a generous amount of non-contact time with students.
70. The finance committee meets regularly and its members are well informed and monitor expenditure rigorously. The principles of best value are well applied, for example when the school put out to tender the contract for grounds maintenance. The carry forward of £241,484 into the current financial year appears very high. In practice most of these funds have been allocated for improvements to accommodation and in equipping these areas. The projected carry forward into the next financial year is about £77,000, which is in line with the guidance provided by the local education authority.
71. The allocation of resources to priorities is good and the resourcing of departments is good. The additional grants the school receives, such as the grant for special educational needs, and the additional funding from being a specialist school, are effectively used for the purposes they were intended for.
72. The school provides good value for money in relation to the standards achieved.

## WORK RELATED LEARNING

Provision in work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a clear vision for work-related learning (WRL) to be at the heart of the curriculum and a recognition that more effective promotion in school is required.
- The school has established effective collaborative arrangements with Connexions but time allocation is inadequate.
- The science curriculum makes very good use of local industry as a teaching resource.
- A two-week work experience is successfully undertaken by all Year 10 students, bolstered by very good links with local industry and business and excellent student attendance.
- The work-related and personal study course (WRAPS) successfully improves personal skills for employment.
- Students demonstrate a very good range of skills and attitudes valued in the work place.

## Commentary

73. A clear vision has been developed for WRL within the curriculum. However, whilst an alternative curriculum option has been successfully implemented, the school recognises that a structured 14-19 vocational curriculum for all needs to be more effectively promoted. There is a determination to ensure that specialist school status adds to the promotion of a vocational culture. Day-to-day management of work-related and personal study, careers and work experience is good. Collaborative working with both Connexions and North Yorkshire Education and Business Partnership (NYEBP) is also good. The school has established and effectively maintains very good links with local businesses, employers and training providers.
74. Students benefit from good guidance and support from the Connexions service. However, allocation of time to the school from the part-time adviser is inadequate and does not fully meet the needs of all students in Years 7 to 11. Good use is made by students of the weekly kiosk 'drop in' managed by the personal adviser. Careers education is well taught through the PHSCE programme in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 to 11, timetabled curriculum provision is made for careers and is successfully delivered.
75. Each student completes a fortnight of work experience at the end of Year 10. The school successfully manages the whole process for all students. Time is taken to ensure that placements are relevant and appropriate. While arrangements for student preparation are sound and the Industry Day is a real strength, the use of a skills audit, goals, targets and tracking are underdeveloped. Work experience attendance is excellent, with many students travelling long distances to their placement. Assessment of all students' developments after the placements is insufficiently developed.
76. Very good links have been established with a network of local industry and business which have allowed the school to successfully manage its own work experience placements. Whilst the science curriculum makes very good use of local industry as a learning resource in all years, many curriculum areas have been slow to follow this successful initiative. Collaborative work with NYEBP has led to the development of Skillsfest in school; a skills initiative to raise awareness of local careers and training progression routes for all Year 10 students.
77. The WRAPS project, an alternative curriculum aimed at a small group of students with varying degrees of learning difficulty, has been very successful raising their aspirations, confidence and self-esteem. Student achievement at GCSE has risen and good use is made of award schemes to accredit skills and experiences. NVQ accreditation is now used to accredit fundamental skills.
78. The curriculum is developing and increasingly addressing the needs of all students, with good emphasis on the drive to extend skills to meet the needs of employers. Additional momentum has been added to this drive by recent changes in senior staff responsibility.

## EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

### Example of outstanding practice

#### **A whole-school assembly to mark Remembrance Day**

The timings of the school day were adjusted so that the whole-school assembly could start at 10:50 a.m. All students entered the hall in a quiet and orderly manner. The hall is too small to accommodate the whole school comfortably, but there was no fuss and students sat to listen to the headteacher talk about his Uncle Ernie who had fought in the First World War and died in the Second World War, reminding them all they too had an 'Uncle Ernie'. Students were clearly moved when the headteacher explained that the statistics of all those who died in the First World War were the equivalent of the deaths of ten times the number of students in the hall, dying every hour for the duration of four years. The service was

also brought up to date when students were asked to think about the teenage children of the Black Watch soldier killed in Iraq and how they would be feeling today. The whole school stood in respectful silence for the two minutes. At the end of the assembly all left quietly. The whole-school community had been part of a moving and shared experience where all had shown great reverence for the importance of the occasion.

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

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

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Leadership by the subject leader is effective.
- There is a very hardworking and enthusiastic staff.
- Drama is used well in the classroom.
- There are weaknesses in the standards of writing in Years 7 and 8.
- Additional extension work is not always provided for higher attaining students.
- Lesson planning does not always take into account the full range of abilities within classes.

##### **Commentary**

79. Results in the 2004 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were lower than those in 2003. They were better, however, than the provisional national average. Achievement in Year 9 is good. In the GCSE examinations of 2004, two-thirds of students provisionally obtained a grade C or better in English Language, and over four out of every five in English Literature. These results indicate good achievement from students' prior attainment in Year 9. Students did slightly better in English than in many other subjects at GCSE, including mathematics and science. There was very little difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
80. Standards of work seen during the inspection, in particular in speaking and listening and reading skills, confirm these above average standards. There are some weaknesses in writing in Years 7 and 8, where lower attaining students, in particular, tend only to use simple sentences and to rely quite heavily on the use of colloquial expressions. By the end of Year 9 the standard of written work is much improved and most students write fluently and accurately. The subject leader for English has introduced a very successful transition unit, designed to boost reading skills, when students first come to the school. At present there is not a similar unit to boost writing. Some higher attaining students are not fully challenged, especially in their first term at the school, when they are placed in mixed ability classes. Students with special educational needs are well supported in the classroom. Teachers display a good knowledge of the individual needs of each student. Learning support assistants are very attentive and very patient. As a result these students make as good progress as other students. Students in Year 9 have a good knowledge of the level at which they are working, but do not always know what they need to do to improve. Standards of written work in Years 10 and 11 are good. For example, some excellent written work describing the character of Shylock in Shakespeare's, 'The Merchant of Venice', was produced for the English Literature examination. Students enjoy writing in a wide range of styles, because the teachers set interesting and imaginative written tasks. Standards of reading are above average. Skills in speaking and listening are good. Students express their opinions clearly and show respect for the views of others. This was seen in a very good discussion by a Year 11 class about the poem, 'Salome' by Carol Ann Duffy. Higher attaining students were able to discuss the language and meaning of the poem in a lucid and detailed manner. Girls' standards are slightly above those of boys, reflecting the national trend.

81. Teaching and learning are good overall, because the teachers have good relationships with the students. Examples of very good teaching were also seen. When teaching is most effective, teachers possess a good knowledge of the subject, are aware of course requirements and the lessons are well paced. Teaching is less effective when the pace of the lesson has slowed. Teachers' planning is not sufficiently developed to take full account of the range of ability that is present, even within groups selected by ability. This is particularly evident in Year 7 classes, before teachers place the students into groups of similar ability.
82. The subject leader provides effective leadership for her team of teachers. She has devised strategies to improve the work of the department. She has recorded these in the school improvement plan. She examines critically the schemes of work used by the department. She provides good opportunities to enrich student learning through school visits to meet contemporary writers. Her own lessons are well prepared and taught. Opportunities for other staff to observe this good practice would be of benefit. Although regular department meetings are held to share information about the teaching, the subject leader does not formally monitor the planning of her staff. She has very little opportunity to observe lessons or to make a formal report back to the teachers. She needs to set aside time to do this.
83. The teachers work extremely hard to prepare and teach good lessons. They are very enthusiastic and are firmly committed to raising standards. They use drama effectively to support the teaching in the classroom. Although accommodation for drama is limited, some good work takes place. Students were seen enacting scenes from Shakespeare's 'The Tempest', and from a version of Dickens' 'Oliver Twist'. The students clearly enjoy it when the teachers can include an element of drama within the lesson. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
84. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Results in examination and test results at the end of Year 9 and 11 have improved and show a positive trend upwards.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

85. Standards of literacy are above average. Key words are displayed in most classrooms, especially in English, mathematics, history and ICT. Corridors display a wide range of written material, especially outside the English and French rooms. In many curricular areas, notably in art and design, English, design and technology and science the teaching encourages the development of speaking and listening skills. In music, good use is made of questioning. In history, extended reading regularly takes place. This department has built up a good library of historical texts. The school library also serves as a classroom, because of the shortage of accommodation. It contains a wide range of modern fiction texts, many of which have been purchased recently. The school does have a literacy policy, and the subject leader for English provides training for other subject leaders on how the policy should be implemented. She monitors the implementation of the school policy well.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A high proportion of students are entered for GCSE and their results are above average.
- Most students are achieving well.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- The subject leader provides good leadership.
- The assessment of students' work is neither identifying underachievement nor making students aware of their progress.

- There is some underachievement by students in Years 7 to 9.



## Commentary

86. GCSE results in French in 2003 were above average. Girls did better than boys but the difference was not as great as the national difference. Students performed better in French by comparison with other subjects. Results are commendable because a very high proportion of Year 11 students were entered for the examination. Only a small number of students were entered for GCSE German but they achieved very well. Results in 2004 were similar to 2003 except that, in 2004, the difference between boys' and girls' performance was in line with national expectations. Since the last inspection results have improved and have been consistently above average for the past five years.
87. In work seen during the inspection standards by the end of Year 9 are above average and, overall, students make good progress. There is particularly good achievement by average and below average students who develop a good knowledge of vocabulary and produce accurate written work. This includes most students with special educational needs because the teachers know and support them well. However, in some Year 9 classes, where there are large numbers of students with special educational needs, achievement is not as good because students are not receiving any extra help. Some higher attaining students do not achieve as well as they could. Overall, students develop good reading and writing skills but do not have enough opportunities to speak in French. Standards in German in Year 9 are below average. However, given the limited time for their second language, achievement is satisfactory. In Year 8, where time allocation is more generous, students achieve well, often very well.
88. Standards in Year 11 are above average in French and students achieve well, especially as the majority of students in the year group are still studying the subject. All students are developing a wide vocabulary which helps them cope well with reading texts; higher attaining students have a good grasp of structure which allows them to produce complex language; average and lower attaining students understand key points of grammar, like the main tenses of verbs, and are able to produce written work at a level that is above their potential. Standards for the small number of students studying German in Year 11 are average, but achievement is good given their attainment at the end of Year 9. There is very good achievement by students in Year 10.
89. Teaching and learning are good overall with examples of very good teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Students learn well because there is a good working atmosphere in lessons and relationships are very good, with the result that students are always attentive and support each other well. Teachers work hard to involve students actively in lessons. Students build their knowledge of vocabulary and develop language skills effectively because lessons are well planned with clear objectives and clear links in learning from one lesson to the next. In the best lessons teachers meet the needs of all students and set challenging targets so all students achieve to their full potential. This is particularly the case in lessons in Years 10 and 11. However, in some lessons in Years 7 to 9, higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers use the target language well in most lessons but do not encourage students to use it for basic communication. The assessment of students' work is systematic, thorough and regular so teachers are always clear about the standards that students have achieved. However, the lack of clear targets for students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, makes it difficult for teachers to identify, and respond to, underachievement by students. Teachers mark students' work regularly, following the school's marking policy, but they rarely show students how to improve the quality of their work, so that students in Years 7 to 9 are not always clear about the progress they are making. In Years 10 and 11, students have a clearer understanding of their learning because teachers regularly explain the meaning of grades to them.

90. Leadership is good with the potential to be very good. The new subject leader has a clear vision of how the department should develop and this has resulted in a very good action plan. Systems are in place to monitor the work of the department; in particular, to monitor the quality of teaching, but these have not yet had an impact. The use of data to evaluate the department's performance is not yet effective so management is satisfactory. The department has good documentation but some of the schemes of work have targets that are not sufficiently challenging. Timetabling problems affect progress in Year 9, and the options system in Year 10 is preventing students who would benefit from the study of a modern foreign language from doing so. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is little storage space and there are only two specialist rooms for three teachers. The latter point was an issue in the last report. Otherwise there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a shared commitment within the department to improve teaching and raise standards.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- There is good use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- In classes where there is a wide range of ability the work does not always cater fully for students with different levels of attainment.

### **Commentary**

91. In the 2003 National tests for 14 year olds, results were above the national average and above average when compared to similar schools. The results in mathematics were similar to those in English, but not as good as results in science. Results have improved since 1999, broadly following the national trend. The results in 2004 are similar to those of 2003. There is no significant difference between boys and girls.
92. The 2003 GCSE examination results in mathematics were above the national average, and average when compared to similar schools. Students' results were below their average results across their other subjects. The 2004 GCSE examination results are similar to those of 2003. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys in mathematics. The proportion of students gaining grades A\* - C has increased since 1999.
93. Students enter the school with attainment in mathematics which is in line with the national average. From work seen during the inspection, students in Year 9 are attaining above the national average. Year 9 higher attaining students demonstrate a good understanding of enlargement, translation, rotation and reflection of triangles and other two-dimensional shapes. They are able to identify similar and congruent triangles, and solve linear equations. Lower attaining students in Year 9 show an understanding of number patterns, can find factors of numbers, and recognise prime numbers. This represents good achievement for students of all levels of attainment, including those students with special educational needs.
94. Students in Year 11 are attaining above the national average. Higher attaining students in Year 11 use a variety of mathematical concepts to solve complex problems. They are able to apply their knowledge of angles and the properties of circles effectively, and use trigonometry to investigate and solve two and three-dimensional problems. They are able to analyse data, producing cumulative frequency tables and graphs to solve problems. Lower attaining Year 11 students can produce scatter diagrams to represent data and find the line of best fit, multiply decimals, and use their knowledge of the properties of angles and triangles to solve problems.

As students' attainment on entry to Year 10 is above average, this represents satisfactory achievement.

95. Standards of teaching and learning are good overall; they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. When teaching is good or better the pace of the lesson is brisk and activities are varied. Teachers encourage all students to contribute to class discussions that clarify and reinforce understanding of mathematical ideas. Students apply themselves well to tasks and work with enthusiasm. When it is used, ICT engages students well and helps develop their understanding of mathematical concepts. This was evident in a Year 11 lesson when an electronic whiteboard was used creatively to demonstrate properties of circles. In a Year 8 lesson, students were able to play team games on an electronic whiteboard to reinforce their understanding of calculations with powers, roots and numbers. In lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, there are weaknesses. The work fails to motivate students, particularly in classes of a wide ability range where activities do not cater fully for different levels of attainment. In these lessons some students become restless, lose concentration and their progress is slow.
96. There is good feedback to students in lessons on how to improve their work. However, in Years 7 to 9, students are not always aware of the National Curriculum levels at which they are working. The system of assessment recently introduced by the department for assessing work gives students good information about their progress, it allows them the opportunity for self-assessment, but it does not give specific details of what must be done to move onto the next National Curriculum level.
97. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed subject leader knows the strengths and weakness of the department and is keen to raise standards. New schemes of work, in line with the national strategy, have been introduced and in-service training and staff development are linked to improving teaching and learning. The subject leader is giving very good support and guidance to two newly qualified teachers and a supply teacher, and she provides a good role model for staff and students. There is a variety of extra-curricular activities open to all students.
98. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. GCSE results have improved significantly, as have National Curriculum test results. A strong induction programme with the local primary school has been introduced which aids transition of students into Year 7. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning has increased. The gap between the performance of boys and girls has narrowed.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

99. A numeracy policy is in place, and opportunities for students to practise mathematical skills are identified in some faculty schemes of work. However, these opportunities are not consistently applied. There are occasional good opportunities for students to use number skills in some subjects. In ICT, students use spreadsheets and formulae to produce graphs; in science, students perform calculations for various measurements and use formulae and graphs to solve practical problems; in design and technology, students measure distance and angles, and weigh ingredients, and in geography students present data from surveys and investigations graphically.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a strong team of knowledgeable science teachers.
- The Year 11 revision scheme is well monitored.
- The subject has strong industry links.

- Students with special educational needs are very well supported.
- Relations between teachers and students are very good.
- Only limited use is made of ICT to support learning.
- There is a shortage of specialist accommodation.
- Timetable distribution of science lessons hinders effective learning and prevents good planning.
- There is a lack of variety in the teaching styles used.

## **Commentary**

100. Standards are good. Students enter the school with standards in line with national averages. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average, and by the end of Year 11 GCSE results are above the national average. Overall, students make good progress between Years 7 to 11. The trend in National Curriculum test results and in GCSE results shows improving results.
101. Achievement is above average. By the end of Year 9 students have made good progress with many students working at higher levels. By the end of Year 9 most students have shown improvements in their practical skills and manipulative skills, can complete calculations using formulae, draw graphs, measure accurately and record observations systematically, analyse results and make appropriate conclusions. A Year 10 class of students with special educational needs showed that they had good practical skills when they tested different catalysts to see which was the most effective. A Year 9 class showed that they had good evidence to prove an accurate melting point for their substances. They measured accurately and made sure that they had consistent results to provide the necessary evidence. Students with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress by the end of Year 9. The river study, started in Year 7, and continued throughout the school, is a key exercise for extending scientific understanding.
102. By the end of Year 11 students have developed good practical skills in all areas of science, in most cases designing their own exercises. They can use complex calculations and chemical formulae, form conclusions using evidence from a number of sources, and discuss confidently and constructively the conclusions from practical exercises. Students would benefit from using more ICT applications in science to provide a wider range of sources of information, and provide an effective medium for presentation of work. A small number of higher attaining students achieve very well, and students with special educational needs make good progress. The students are on course to meet their targets by the end of Year 9. Double award science students are also on course to meet targets, and students on the applied science course need to translate their good work into strong assessments.
103. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is good because there are good relations between teachers and students, the teachers are experts in their own subject areas, and students are supported well individually in class. Teachers provide appropriate challenge and organise lessons so that the pace will stretch the students, extending their skills, knowledge and understanding. Students learn effectively because they make good use of prior knowledge, can use resources for improving their knowledge, and extend their understanding by completing practical exercises. They learn new practical skills to help them test more complex ideas as they move through the school. Students are well motivated and enthusiastic to learn in science. The teachers plan schemes well to ensure that all students can learn and improve their understanding. A greater range of teaching approaches would promote more effective learning for some students.
104. Leadership and management are good. The department is well led and managed. The teachers work well as a team and collaboratively, and all school policies are implemented effectively. More work needs to be completed on using ICT applications to support student learning, and many of the policies, although being implemented effectively, will need to be reinforced formally in the science schemes. The teachers work hard, providing good schemes

of work, and additional sessions to support separate science entries and revision requirements. Students with special educational needs are supported extremely effectively by the integration of one teaching assistant into the science department. His expertise is the key to many students' making good progress and enjoying science. There are very good industry links established with a range of industries, to support the applied science course. These industries, a brewery, jeweller, potter, and farm food manufacturer, are developing wider links with more students. Assessment in science is good, with information used to set targets for all students. Their progress is regularly reviewed and discussed with students and parents. Year 11 students specifically find great benefits in the monitoring of their revision scheme.

105. The accommodation is generally good, but with a shortage of specialist laboratories for the increasing number of students. This has a limiting effect on student learning in Years 10 and 11. In addition, timetabling arrangements, where three science lessons occur on one day for Year 10 does not provide planning opportunities for the science department to use their resources effectively. This limits learning outcomes. The quality of science technician support is good but with more hours needed to service the increasing needs of greater numbers of students. The preparation and storage areas are too small to provide an efficient service. Resources to address the extension of ICT applications will be needed.
106. There are plans, with the gaining of specialist science status, for the school to improve resource levels to enable more ICT to be used to support learning. In addition, there are good links developing with other schools. Links within the school with the art and design and design and technology departments are being developed further and will lead to improved learning opportunities for students. There are no health and safety issues. There has been good progress since the last inspection report with results continuing to improve. Some accommodation issues still remain but the storage of chemicals is now satisfactory.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning in ICT lessons are good.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- The introduction of GCSE ICT and NVQ ICT as options for students in Year 10 gives students the opportunity to follow vocational courses.
- The introduction of separate ICT lessons for Years 7 to 9 provides better opportunities for students to develop their skills and knowledge and has raised the profile of ICT.
- The level of resources is not sufficient for all teachers to have enough access to computers to support teaching and learning in their subjects.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning is inconsistent across some subjects.

### **Commentary**

107. GCSE and NVQ courses have been introduced for the current Year 10 students; hence there are no external examination results in ICT for 2004. Provision for students in Year 11 in 2003 was through subjects. They received their minimum entitlement and their achievement was satisfactory.
108. Teachers' assessments of students at the end of Year 9, in 2003, indicate that students' attainments are in line with national averages for ICT, and in line when compared to schools with similar prior attainment. The 2004 teachers' assessments are similar to those of 2003 and exceed the ICT target set by the school.

109. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are average. Students enter the school with a wide range of levels of skill in using ICT. Overall, their attainment at the beginning of Year 7 is average, so their achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9 students use wordprocessing and multimedia software packages to present work, databases and spreadsheets to process information, and are confident users of the Internet to research topics. Higher attaining students have a good understanding of how to apply different packages to different situations. Lower attaining students display satisfactory technical skills but do not always complete their work thoroughly. In most lessons students of all backgrounds and levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.
110. Students in Year 11 gain ICT experience solely through cross-curricular courses, their levels of skills are average and their achievement is satisfactory. They receive a minimum entitlement. The subject leader effectively monitors the progress of these students and those in Year 10 who do not have timetabled ICT lessons. Year 11 students are confident users of the Internet for research, use spreadsheets to present numerical data and to produce graphs. They make good use of multimedia packages to produce animated presentations of their work in a number of subjects. For those students who study GCSE or NVQ ICT in Year 10, achievement is good. Higher attaining students in these groups show a good understanding of computers and their uses. They make good use of spreadsheets and databases to process information and are able to give good descriptions of how they have used various packages. Lower attaining students produce work that requires satisfactory technical skills, but their work is sometimes incomplete and lacks explanation.
111. Teaching and learning in ICT lessons are good. Lessons are well structured, pace of learning is brisk, teachers use a wide range of activities to capture students' interest, and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. In a Year 9 class of lower attaining students who were developing a multimedia presentation about themselves, the teacher devised a variety of activities to capture their interest and reinforce literacy skills, very good support was given by a teaching assistant and a technician to ensure students worked with confidence. All students were enthusiastic about their work and made very good progress in developing their ICT and literacy skills.
112. For all Year 11 students, and those students in Year 10 who do not study GCSE or NVQ ICT, teaching and learning of ICT is through other subjects, and teaching and learning are satisfactory. In these cases, marking and assessment of work, and feedback to students, are generally based on content relating to the subject being studied, and do not always indicate to students how they can improve or extend their ICT skills.
113. Most students have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well, relationships are good, and students collaborate well with one another. The contribution that ICT makes to the teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. Key words are displayed around the rooms and are used in most lessons. Students practise speaking and listening skills in collaborative work. They extend their numeracy skills using formulae in spreadsheets and representing information using graphs. Assessment and target setting are used effectively for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and for pupils studying GCSE and NVQ ICT courses. Pupils are aware of the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to reach the next level.
114. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed subject leader has a clear vision of how to improve the provision of ICT. There is a strong commitment to improving teaching and raising standards, which is having a positive impact on standards of attainment of students. There is good technical support, which promotes confidence and assists in raising standards. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory, and have increased since the previous inspection. However, some subject leaders have identified restricted access to computer rooms as limiting the use of ICT to support learning in their areas. There are very

good opportunities for students to use the ICT facilities for extra-curricular activities at break time, lunchtime and after school.

115. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Further investment in computers, electronic whiteboards and additional software has improved the use of ICT, although there are still insufficient numbers of computers for all teachers to have full access to computers to support teaching and learning in their subjects. Separate lessons in ICT for students in Years 7 to 9 provide better opportunities for students to develop their skills and knowledge, and the introduction of GCSE and NVO ICT as options for students in Year 10 gives them the opportunity to study a vocational course.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

116. There is inconsistent use of ICT across the subjects of the curriculum to improve students' learning. Students use word processing to present coursework, and the Internet to research topics, in most subject areas. Electronic whiteboards are used effectively to present information to pupils in ICT and mathematics. However, although the resources have improved since the last inspection, there are insufficient to ensure all subjects have easy access to facilities. Science, design and technology, modern languages, music, citizenship and history do not make enough use of ICT for independent learning, developing students' skills or to support teaching.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory** but with some weaknesses that need addressing.

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

- Teachers' good subject knowledge underpins effective teaching.
- Relationships are good between teachers and students.
- Coursework for GCSE is well planned.
- Assessment for National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.
- Achievement at higher grades at GCSE in 2004 was unsatisfactory
- Student assessment information is insufficiently used to support learning.

#### **Commentary**

117. Standards by the end of Year 9, measured by teacher assessments for the three years 2002 to 2004, were judged higher than what is usually expected nationally of students at age 14. This is not reflected overall in the work seen during the inspection and indicates some unreliability in teachers' understanding and moderation of attainment levels. In Years 10 and 11 the proportion of students opting to continue with geography to GCSE level has varied from one third to almost half of the year group. Overall more boys than girls choose the subject. Over the past three years standards have varied at the higher grades. In 2002 and 2003 GCSE results were close to the national average. In 2004 attainment at the higher grades was well below the previous two years for both boys and girls and well below expectation and results they achieved in their other subjects.
118. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 7 to 9 are overall in line with national expectations. In Year 7, students have two lessons each week and through a well-planned scheme of work develop a secure grasp of key geographical terms and skills. In Years 8 and 9, under the new timetable arrangement, students have one lesson per week. Higher attaining students in the top set of Year 9 demonstrate a good understanding of concepts



such as the impact of economic development in contrasting regions of the world. Overall achievement across Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory.

119. With the exception of the 2004 GCSE results (the school has requested a remark of some of the examination papers) achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Students acquire increasing competence as independent learners to collect and analyse information. The well-planned coursework, based on a visit to Ripon, provides a very good opportunity for students to apply models of urban development to their research and present their findings making good use of ICT.
120. The quality of teaching and learning seen in lessons and reflected in samples of students' work ranges from very good to usually good or satisfactory to occasionally unsatisfactory. The two teachers have good subject knowledge and manage students' behaviour effectively. Relationships between teachers and students are good. In the strongest lessons the choice of methods and materials ensures that students are fully engaged so that they are challenged to think and produce good oral and written responses to well focused questions. In a Year 9 lesson higher attaining students made very good progress, because the very good subject knowledge of the teacher used skilful questioning, a video extract and a range of maps, diagrams and photographs to look at social and economic changes in south-east Brazil. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory and the attitude and behaviour of students are generally good. Where, occasionally, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, this is because planning does not structure the one-hour lesson to ensure that students maintain interest. As a result the pace of learning is reduced and students' skills in listening and concentration are weak and progress is limited. In a Year 9 group of lower attaining students unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour impeded the learning. Where additional help is provided in lessons for students with special educational needs this is effectively used.
121. Students' work is regularly marked and constructive comments are given. Work is assessed in line with school policy and progress is recorded in the teachers' record books. Insufficient use is made of the range of assessment information to inform lesson planning in order to ensure that there is a suitable match between teaching approaches and the wide range of students' learning needs. In Years 7 to 9, students' attainment is not consistently referenced to National Curriculum levels and the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, especially at higher levels, are significantly higher than standards seen during the inspection. Feedback to students so that they know what to do to improve their work is more effective with Years 10 and 11 but in Years 7 to 9 this is less well developed.
122. The subject is satisfactorily led. The subject leader is committed and enthusiastic and provides a good role model for others. The department is well organised and efficiently managed. The school has already identified the areas of weakness confirmed during the inspection and the subject leader, well supported by the senior leadership team and the LEA adviser, has the capacity to manage further improvement. Overall, since the last inspection progress is satisfactory.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and results overall are well above average and students achieve very well.
- Vigorous, enthusiastic and dynamic teaching leads to very good learning
- The subject makes a very significant contribution to students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- Students do not fully understand the assessment system in Years 7 to 9

## **Commentary**

123. Standards and results are well above average overall. Students enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment in history. Teacher assessments, as well as observations during the inspection, show that their work is above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. In four of the last five years, GCSE results have been well above average. In 2003 and 2004 students did better in history than in most of their other GCSE subjects, gaining 80 per cent and 88 per cent passes at grades A\*-C respectively.

124. In Years 7 to 9 students develop skills in identifying primary and secondary sources and evaluating them. During the inspection, Year 9 students were comparing and interpreting various pieces of information about a mining disaster and were gradually able to piece together a vivid description of the dangers of coal-mining, the effects of such an event on a small community and a complete analysis of the course of events. Students make rapid progress developing empathy skills at an early stage. Higher attaining students produce high quality research and skilful evaluations. Lower attaining students make very good progress, though their interpretation of graphs is more limited and they are less successful in understanding cause and effect. Girls and boys, students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented all achieve very well because they work hard, are stimulated by very good teaching and are very well supported by their teachers.
125. In Years 10 and 11 students are able to research independently, organise and evaluate complex issues and produce impressive extended writing assignments. Higher attaining students produce written work of exceptional quality, for example in their study of the history of public health. Some of their coursework on aspects of the First World War is worthy of the highest grades.
126. Very good teaching and learning are at the heart of students' very good progress. The teachers have high expectations of themselves and their students. They plan lessons with variety and pace and their expert subject knowledge and enthusiasm generate interest and positive responses from students. Classes listen enthralled as teachers make them aware of the past. Some lessons become a hive of activity as students complete a wide variety of research tasks, using the library, Internet research, textbooks and picture sources. Teachers put a strong emphasis on developing students' examination technique at an early stage in the GCSE course, which is an important element in their success.
127. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The experienced subject leader leads a strong team of highly competent teachers who share the same vision. The staff are hard working, committed and enthusiastic. Numbers of students choosing history as a GCSE option are rising. The material studied, and the learning methods, make a very good contribution to students' personal development and their awareness of the world and human behaviour. Leadership has correctly identified the need to improve and clarify assessment systems so that students are better informed about the standards they are reaching using national curriculum levels.
128. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have risen. Very good teaching has continued, leading to even better results. The students' positive response has been maintained. This is a very strong department which was good at the time of the last inspection and is now very good.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results in the short course have been consistently above average.
- Standards are rising in Years 7 to 11.
- Good teaching and the positive attitudes of students ensure good learning and achievement.
- In a minority of lessons the pace is slow, so that students' progress is slower.

## **Commentary**

129. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above national expectations and students are achieving well. In Years 10 and 11 all students follow either a full or short course GCSE in religious studies. Numbers in the full course are small and results have fluctuated wildly over the last six years, with students gaining results well above average, average and below average. In the short course examination, which students can opt to sit at the end of Year 11, results have been consistently well above average for three years.
130. Students enter the school with varying experiences of religious education and overall standards on entry are average, with some students below average. They make good progress so that standards are above average by the end of Year 9 with good achievement. Students in Year 7 learn the basic beliefs and customs of several world religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. During the inspection, students in Year 7 demonstrated good understanding of the Hindu concept of gods and goddesses, Year 8 students were able to produce an extended account of the Biblical story of Joseph and in Year 9 they had produced very good accounts and analyses of the five pillars of Islam. Students learn and understand specialist vocabulary and can discuss effectively the topics they have studied.
131. In Years 10 and 11 a small number of students in both year groups have opted to study the full course GCSE. Their work on Judaism and the Christian response to contemporary issues is mature and detailed. Students in Year 11 carry out good quality Biblical research in order to develop knowledge and understanding of Christian issues. Their work was above average, suggesting that most should achieve results in the A\*-C range. The majority of students in Years 10 and 11 follow the short course GCSE syllabus and are able to discuss their work on a wide variety of topics. In a lesson during the inspection they demonstrated a mature understanding of the issues concerning the sanctity of life and were applying what they had learned about Christian views to recent items in the news and from the Internet about fertility treatments and embryo research. During the course students look at an impressive range of topics, such as the environment, the use and abuse of animals and concepts of good and evil. The focus is on developing students' communication skills through discussion and debate combined with academic rigour in accurate research and understanding of religious viewpoints. All students achieve well and the small number who choose to take the examination achieve very well. There is no difference in the relative achievement of girls and boys. Students with special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported by teachers and given work carefully adapted to their needs.
132. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons giving equal weight to learning about religion and learning from religion. In most lessons students enjoy a good balance of reading, writing, research and discussion. Just occasionally the pace is slower and so progress is slower. Teachers who are not subject experts are very well supported by the subject leader. Students trust their teachers and are willing to engage in serious discussion and to offer their views. The department has just introduced the recommended national system for assessment in religious education so that, in future, students will be able to measure their progress against national curriculum levels and thus be much better informed about their progress and achievement. A strong emphasis on literacy helps to raise standards, as well as good relationships and good class control.
133. Leadership of the department is good with a clear vision for raising standards. Management is satisfactory. Some weaknesses exist in the assessment of students' work but these are being addressed. There are plans to develop subject monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. This will be effective once the new assessment system is firmly in place. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards are rising, teaching and learning have improved and the accommodation and resources are now good.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is consistently good achievement in Years 7 to 11 as a result of very good teaching.
- GCSE results are well above average with boys' attainment better than girls'.
- There is very good leadership and management with a relentless focus on raising standards.
- Students desire to learn and they have very mature approaches to working and good independent learning skills.
- There is insufficient development of computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacture (CAM) to improve the quality and accuracy of design.
- There is underdeveloped use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Technician support time in all areas is inadequate.

#### Commentary

134. At the end of Year 9, the standards achieved are above average in all subject areas. This represents good achievement as students enter the school with average technological experience and skills. Students, by the end of Year 11, reach standards which are well above average. Standards in 2003 GCSE food, textiles and resistant materials are well above average. Students achieve higher grades in technology than in other school subjects and the performance of boys is better than girls. Provisional 2004 GCSE results confirm this position. This represents good achievement across all ability groups, including the gifted and talented and students with special educational needs. Since the last inspection GCSE standards have risen significantly. Students explore design briefs successfully, analyse their designs systematically and complete major pieces of coursework to above expected standards. Despite unrefined freehand graphics and limited use of CAD, students assemble folios efficiently. While listening skills and oral skills are sound, writing in the form of design annotation is underdeveloped. The very positive student attitudes to learning and challenge in lessons underpin good achievement. The high standards achieved by boys reflect their enthusiasm for making, very good relationships and informal yet firm management to exploit their capacity to work hard.
135. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. Full advantage is taken of student interest in the subject, their thinking relentlessly challenged and they are taught to take responsibility, particularly when involved in manufacturing. Homework is successfully used to consolidate and extend knowledge and understanding. Extra-curricular time is successfully provided for GCSE students. Tasks are well matched to student need and provide opportunities to demonstrate a range of design and manufacturing skills. Assessment is very well used to demonstrate to students how they can improve. Overall, ICT is insufficiently used to support learning. This is evident when students are undertaking research and compiling the contents of their folder as they rarely produce single, coherent documents using keyboard cut and paste techniques, with appropriate editing and annotation. Very good learning support is provided for special needs students although, currently, technician support time is inadequate as a result of a resignation. The vacancy is currently being advertised.
136. Very good leadership and management are characterised by a relentless focus on raising standards. A strong team of staff are clear about what they are working towards. Very good role models are provided for all students. There is a pragmatic vision for the subject, which underpins the determined drive to raise standards. However, periods of reflection as well as self-criticism are necessary to effectively plan for further improvement. Classroom

performance is monitored but a rigorous analysis of performances is not closely enough linked to explicit training to further improve practice in literacy and ICT. Risk assessments are sound, are being systematically adapted to suit lessons but do not include a risk assessment of individual rooms with unique layouts. Development planning is competently undertaken but requires more robust success criteria.

137. Taken as a whole, and despite limits to the scale of curriculum development as a consequence of the school size, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. It has the capacity to consolidate improvements made and further raise standards.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well as a result.
- Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11.
- Leadership and management are good, and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
- There is not enough experimentation with materials for students to fully develop their painting skills.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not linked to the National Curriculum, and students are not quite sure how well they are doing, or how to improve.

### **Commentary**

138. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, results were above average. Numbers were too small to reliably compare the results of boys and girls with their respective national averages. In 2004, results at GCSE were at a similar level.
139. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average. Students' achievement is good, and they make good gains in the skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Their colour and pattern work is bright and lively, and they create complex designs based on a study of the work of David Hockney. They develop these into attractive prints, using subtle greens and blues very effectively. Three-dimensional work is strong; clay masks are well made and brightly coloured, and totem poles in card are large and highly decorative. Students with special educational needs make good progress because of the active nature of lessons, and because they are encouraged to undertake large individual pieces, in drawing or sculpture.
140. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average, and students' achievement continues to be good. Their composition work is strong, and they create large paintings that capture the excitement of sportsmen and women in action. Their observation work is accurate, and they draw the complex shapes seen in crushed soft drink containers very well. Their work in low relief is vigorous, and higher attaining students produce lively pieces in card and tissue paper, based on the theme of clowns. Students' sketchbooks are thorough, and the art of other cultures is often studied well. However, while students' work is often careful and considered, there is not enough experimentation with materials to fully develop their painting skills.
141. Teaching and learning are good. This is because teachers have good subject knowledge, and give good individual advice. They also have high expectations of behaviour, and are very encouraging throughout the lesson. As a result, students get down to work very quickly, and try hard to succeed. This produces a good pace, and good learning, in most lessons.

However, in Years 7 to 9, students are not quite sure how well they are doing, or how they can improve, because assessment systems are not linked to the National Curriculum levels.

142. Leadership and management are good. Projects have been regularly reviewed and improved, and results at GCSE have also improved. The recent achievement of specialist school status in the visual arts and science has inspired teachers, and plans for the future are exciting and ambitious.
143. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards in Year 11 are now above average, and the quality of teaching and learning, and students' achievement, are now good overall.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good musical leadership and very good relationships motivate students to achieve well.
- Well planned lessons and very good assessment promote students' independent learning.
- Accommodation for instrumental music lessons is inadequate.
- The limited access to computers in the music room is a constraint on learning.

### **Commentary**

144. Standards in music have been improving since the last inspection and are good at the end of Year 9 and well above average at GCSE level, with students gaining 100 per cent A\*-C grades in 2004. This represents very good achievement by the end of Year 11, as standards are average on entry to the school.
145. Overall, students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well in music. Students in Years 7 to 8 are acquiring good ensemble playing skills. In their listening work students are learning to listen critically and to understand key musical concepts such as structure. Students in Year 9 have a good understanding of the relationships between sounds and symbols. Boys and girls perform equally well using keyboards, and in their composing are using correct musical terms and devices, such as sequence and imitation, well. Students with special educational needs do well.
146. In Years 10 and 11, students' overall achievement is good and their composing and performing skills are developing well. Year 11 students are developing a body of musical knowledge and considerable understanding of the essential principles of musical theory and practice, and their aural work is good. Higher attaining students could be encouraged to do more to develop composition work, as their use of music software is potentially very good, but the lack of computers in the music department is a considerable constraint on their learning progress.
147. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 7 to 9. Where teaching is very good, it is characterised by good subject knowledge and by very good relationships with the students that promote very good learning. Lessons are well planned and structured with the whiteboard used expertly to help focus the students' attention on the key tasks and lesson objectives. Questioning is used well. Individual students make good progress as a result of the developmental advice they receive from the teacher. The teaching has a strong awareness of differentiation but more complex tasks could be devised for higher attaining students, especially those in Years 10 and 11, who should be capable of the very highest attainment in the GCSE examinations. Instrumental teaching is good but it needs to be more

closely aligned to the work of the department as a whole, as it could complement and extend the class music activities. Overall students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are always attentive in class and committed to their studies, showing respect for each other's composing and co-operating well when playing duets on keyboards.

148. Students also achieve well because of the good leadership and management of the department. The documentation and newly developed assessment scheme, including the tracking and data analysis of students' work, are very good and a model of good practice. Assessment is considerably improved since the last inspection and is used well to inform students of their progress and to explain what it is that they have to do to improve. Extra-curricular music activities are not currently available (apart from support work at lunchtimes for individual students in Years 10 and 11) but the school is investigating alternative additional forms of delivery in terms of staffing that would make this important aspect of school life more available to students. The numbers of students learning instruments has increased since the last inspection and, at over 20 per cent of the school's population, is well above the national average.
149. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards are now improved and performing and composing are a full part of the provision. Time for music is now satisfactory and numbers taking GCSE music examinations have increased. Accommodation for the class teaching of music is now good but the room used for instrumental teaching is inadequate and too far removed from the music department. Provision for multicultural education in music is at an early stage of development.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory** but with weaknesses that need addressing.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good relationships are a feature of all lessons.
- Students are attentive, well behaved and persevere with their learning.
- The encouragement and engagement of students are good.
- End of unit and end of year assessments are not robust enough and they are not related to National Curriculum levels.
- Teachers make insufficient use of assessment to ensure that students are fully challenged.
- In some lessons students are given too few opportunities to demonstrate initiative and to take responsibility for their learning.

### Commentary

150. Standards are below average overall. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 shows standards as being above the national average but this was not evident from the standards seen in lessons. The information held by the school on students' attainment levels is not reliable and teachers do not understand how to apply the level criteria accurately. Students in Year 7 enter the school with varying levels of physical competence. Many lack the basic skills to provide the building blocks for further learning. As a result students in Year 8 are still acquiring and developing the knowledge and understanding to apply these skills. Girls in Year 7 hockey lessons are still developing accuracy in the push pass and have a limited understanding of the attacking/defending nature of the game. Boys in Year 8 rugby are more secure in passing the ball over a short distance and more fluent in receiving and passing. They are developing an understanding of the rules of the game and respect decisions made by the referee.



151. The school has introduced GCSE this year and the Year 10 students from this course in badminton lessons lacked control, accuracy and consistency in their play. Boys seen in Year 11 core badminton also lack accuracy and control. Many do not know or understand the wrist action required in badminton and some have an incorrect grip. In a Year 10 hockey lesson students are beginning to apply their learning in devising drills to outwit an opponent, which they can use later in a game. Boys are beginning to transfer learning from football to hockey in understanding the invasion principle of the game and both girls and boys are developing control in their stick work and greater consistency and accuracy in passing.
152. Achievement is satisfactory. On occasions, the tasks set for students do not always match their needs. There is often a lack of challenge to extend the skills of the higher attaining students and to help lower attaining students master basic skills. Tasks for learning, particularly in badminton, do not always match the ability of the students and teachers move on from task to task before learning is embedded. In some lessons there is a lack of clear teaching points and diagnostic feedback to help students achieve better.
153. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In all lessons there are good relationships and participation rates in most lessons are good. Classes are small and students are well behaved and attentive and persevere despite the inhospitable climate they experience on the exposed playing fields. Teachers are particularly good at encouraging students and interact well with individuals. In some otherwise satisfactory lessons there is a mismatch between the tasks for learning and the ability of the students. Pace of the lesson is often slow and lack of appropriate challenge results in many students' not achieving their full potential. Lessons are predominately whole group, teacher-led learning. In the better lessons students are given responsibility for applying their learning, as in a Year 8 rugby lesson where individuals lead warm ups and in a Year 10 hockey lesson where students devise their own drills.
154. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader is new in post but is receiving support from the leadership team and he is also undertaking leadership training. An evaluation of the work of the department has been undertaken, resulting in an action plan to raise standards. There are clear targets for development, including the expansion of the GCSE programme, which has been successfully implemented. It is a small department in which not one of the three staff is a full-time physical education teacher and some are only part-time in the school. Despite this, effective teamwork practices have been established. Schemes of work need reviewing as they currently make no reference to the four strands and have a strong emphasis on task. A more rigorous approach has been introduced to the Year 10 and 11 option programme focusing the students on improvement and away from recreation, although provision for these students is only one hour per week.
155. The assessment formula for end of year levels is not sufficiently robust to give an accurate indication of a student's standard. The process used involves selecting from two different areas the two best performances and producing a best fit final grade using an A\* - G system. National Curriculum levels are not on display so students have a limited understanding of where they are and what they need to do to improve. There is a lack of feedback to students during lessons to help them know how to improve and of the use of clear demonstration to enable them to identify what good practice looks like.
156. The school has its own sports hall and squash courts, which the community has access to outside school hours and students benefit from the use of these resources. Support from other members of staff adds width to the extra-curricular programme, which offers opportunities for the more motivated and talented students. The school has links with a local rugby club, which provides coaching in curriculum time. The school offers outdoor and adventurous activities during curriculum time in orienteering, which it hopes to extend further. Extra-curricular opportunities for windsurfing and sailing are available to any student and Year 8 students have access to a five-day residential at a local outdoor centre.

157. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Overall standards have deteriorated and the quality of teaching has not been maintained. There is still a lack of short-term learning for improvement, with clear feedback on how to get better. However, the newly appointed subject leader has identified some clear action points for improvement.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are attentive and participate actively when given the opportunity.
- Heads of year are involved in the planning of the programme, which is taught by a large number of teachers, including senior staff.
- Contributions to citizenship from other subjects have not yet been identified.
- There is insufficient use made of paired and group work.
- Staff training for professional development has yet to take place.

### Commentary

158. Standards seen during the inspection are average. Students are developing knowledge and understanding of different topics and of what it means to be a citizen in school and beyond. Written work shows a range of activities to facilitate learning, utilising question and answer, posters and opportunities to reflect. All the strands of the subject are covered; heads of year have developed effective schemes of work. However, mapping the whole curriculum has not yet been undertaken to identify where aspects of citizenship are also being taught outside the timetabled lessons.
159. Teaching takes place in a weekly one-hour period for all students within a personal, social, health and citizenship programme taught by a large team of teachers, including all members of the leadership team. There is some lack of clarity of what aspects are personal, social and health education and what distinct citizenship is. Teachers involved in teaching the programme were only identified at the end of the previous school year and were unable to receive any professional development in advance of teaching the course.
160. Achievement is satisfactory. Students are attentive and well behaved. They engage with the learning and show concern for others when given opportunity to take responsibility. Each tutor group chooses a representative for the student council which meets regularly and there are clear opportunities for representatives to feedback on the work of the council and to identify items for future agendas. Students have a mature attitude to their learning as seen in a Year 11 lesson on HIV and AIDS, where students were exploring social prejudice. Year 7 students following a lesson on 'The School Council' applied their knowledge of the required qualities of a councillor in a selection exercise. They also raised issues such as race to illustrate how individuals' choice may be affected and pupils were made aware of the multicultural differences that exist in other parts of the country.
161. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships are good in all lessons. Students are well behaved and engage productively with the learning, offering their views and opinions which teachers seek to clarify and challenge as in the case of the Year 11 lesson in which a few students held entrenched views. Lessons offer students the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding, to develop skills, particularly in speaking and listening, and to consider their own and others' attitudes. Teachers are confident and are developing competence in using a wider range of learning styles, although whole-class teaching is a dominant feature in some lessons, with question and answer being the only strategy used. When students are given the opportunity to work in pairs, or small groups, they stay on task and can give clear feedback to the class, as in a Year 10 lesson on child abuse.

162. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Year heads take an active role in planning and delivering the programme and are forming teams within the respective year groups, managing the implementation of this new programme well. Senior staff are actively engaged in delivering the programme, especially with Year 11 students. Heads of year have developed schemes of work, albeit only for the first term, and are reviewing progress regularly with their teams, and feeding back into the wider leadership team with the subject co-ordinator. The development of this area of the curriculum is a key issue within the school improvement plan and there is a clear action plan. Mapping of the whole curriculum has not yet taken place but is planned as is a whole-school policy statement.
163. Some accommodation is not conducive to active learning as some classrooms have layouts which militate against group work, and the subject focus of the rooms does not enable the display of citizenship based materials to aid learning.
164. The subject was not inspected at the time of the last inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

*poor (6); very poor (7).*