

INSPECTION REPORT

SEVERN VALE SCHOOL

Quedgeley, Gloucestershire

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115726

Headteacher: Mr Peter Rowland

Lead inspector: Mrs Sue Kearney

Dates of inspection: 7 – 10 March 2005

Inspection number: 268452

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 students:	11 – 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1130
School address:	School Lane Quedgeley Gloucester Gloucestershire
Postcode:	GL2 4PR
Telephone number:	01452 720458
Fax number:	01452 724900
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Standing
Date of previous inspection:	23 November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Severn Vale School is a secondary school providing education for 1130 boys and girls aged 11 to 16. The number of students is in line with the national average for secondary schools and has increased significantly since the last inspection. It is located in the city of Gloucester and operates within a selective system; there are several grammar schools in the region. The attainment of students when they join the school covers the whole range of ability including the most able but there is not the normal distribution and attainment is generally below average. Students join the school from the immediate area and applications in recent years have greatly exceeded the admission numbers; the school has a very good reputation and is very popular. The proportions of boys and girls are broadly balanced across the school, but there are significantly more boys than girls in Year 11. The school population is very stable, with few students joining after Year 7. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average, reflecting the generally average social background of students.

The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average, but the number who have Statements of Special Needs is above average. The range of special needs covers dyslexia and other moderate learning needs (24 students). There are 11 students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and the remaining students are registered across a range covering hearing, visual and physical impairment and autism; there are also a few students with specific medical needs. There are six students in public care and a very small number of refugee children. Nearly all students are white; seven per cent of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly of mixed race. Of these, nearly all have a good competence in the English language. Almost three-quarters of students leave Year 11 to go on to further education.

The school was designated a Specialist Technology College in September 2003 and received the Schools Achievement Award in the same year. It also has national awards for Investor in People, Sportsmark and for careers.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18006	Sue Kearney	Lead inspector	
9970	John Acaster	Lay inspector	
19135	Derek Ebbage	Team inspector	Mathematics
14596	Anthony Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language Work-related learning
22685	Natalie Moss	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
20497	Vernon Williams	Team inspector	Geography
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education
8503	Alf Alfree	Team inspector	Design and technology
12356	Richard Dickason	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	English
30344	Stephen Walker	Team inspector	History
30072	Joseph Skivington	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
31159	Clive Simmonds	Team inspector	Science
19867	Maxwell Pettitt	Team inspector	Music Art and design Drama

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Severn Vale School is a good and improving school. GCSE examination results have improved since the last inspection at a rate similar to that of the national trend. Teaching is good in all years and often very good, so ensuring the good achievement of students as they move through the school. Leadership is good and management systems are effective. The majority of students have good attitudes to learning. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in recent years have risen at a rate above the national trend and in 2004 were above the national average when compared with all schools.
- In nearly three quarters of lessons observed the quality of teaching was good and it was very good in almost one third.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good because of very good support and monitoring of their progress.
- The quality of provision in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good, ensuring the good achievement of all students.
- The majority of students have good attitudes to work and behaviour is good. However, a small, but significant, minority of students display unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour which does disrupt the learning of others.
- Teaching in a small proportion of lessons is unsatisfactory, because of weaknesses in the development of students' speaking and listening skills, the management of behaviour and too few strategies to involve and engage students in their own learning.
- Although there are some good features of innovation in curriculum design, there are too few opportunities for the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in some subjects.
- Good systems are used effectively to monitor the academic progress of students, building on very good links with partner primary schools.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school has tackled very effectively some weaknesses in mathematics, art and design and physical education. The school has gained several national awards, including specialist status in technology. There have been significant improvements in the quality of the accommodation. GCSE examination results have been maintained in line with national improvement. There remain some inconsistencies in the teaching. Religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the requirement for a daily act of collective worship continue to fail to meet statutory requirements. The school does not ensure all students have their full entitlement to use ICT in all subjects in Years 10 and 11.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	D

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.
For Year 11, similar schools are those with students with similar prior attainment.*

Standards of work seen are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. **This represents good achievement for students** in Years 7 to 11, when their prior attainment is taken into account.

A high proportion of the teaching is good or very good and this ensures that students make good progress as they move through the school. The school operates in an area that has a selective system and so has fewer higher-attaining students than other secondary schools. Despite this, in recent years students' achievement across Years 7 to 9 has been very good, as a result of good

teaching, good systems for monitoring academic progress and very effective implementation of the national strategy. This has not been sustained into Years 10 and 11, where standards have fallen in comparison with those of similar schools, based on students' prior attainment. However, the standards of work seen for the current Years 10 and 11 indicate that the school's intervention strategies are working successfully and students' achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. The school is very successful in supporting the learning of students with special educational needs. There is some under-achievement by boys in some subjects.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education, as a result of good support from the pastoral system and good teaching and learning across all years. Teachers use assessment data well to monitor students' progress, and there are generally high expectations of good behaviour and attendance. However, a small but significant amount of teaching is unsatisfactory, particularly when the unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes of a minority of students affects their learning negatively. The curriculum is good, with good opportunities for enrichment, and links with parents and the community are good. There are some very effective links with other schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. The headteacher and governors are very aware of the needs of the students and have been effective in bringing about many improvements. Funding from a wide range of external sources has been used successfully to achieve these priorities. The headteacher is well regarded and plays an active role in local partnerships that bring benefits to the school.

Management is good. There are rigorous systems to monitor the performance of individual students, classes and subjects. However, these are not fully effective in all areas of school performance. There remains too much teaching that is unsatisfactory and areas of non-compliance, and there is unsatisfactory provision in music, religious education and modern foreign languages. Governance is satisfactory.

Students' personal qualities, particularly their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are well nurtured. There are good systems to support and monitor all aspects of the students' experience in school. The majority of students have good attitudes to work and behaviour is good. Attendance levels are above the national average.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students express high levels of satisfaction with the school. Severn Vale is a popular school, which maintains a good reputation in competition with several local grammar schools. Their concerns about unsatisfactory behaviour by a small proportion of the students are supported by inspection evidence.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to bring all to the level of the very best by:
 - focusing on the development of students' literacy skills, particularly speaking and listening;
 - using ICT more effectively to enhance teaching and learning;
 - sharing strategies to manage disruptive behaviour and engage students in their own learning.
- Review the behaviour policy and procedures to ensure that the unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes of the small minority do not impact negatively on the learning of the majority.

Breaches of statutory requirements include the provision of a daily act of collective worship, the entitlement for ICT across subjects in Years 10 and 11, and full coverage of programmes of study in religious education in Years 10 and 11.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

GCSE examination results have kept pace with the national trend of improvement since the last inspection in 1998. The achievement of students awarded grades A* to C has fallen since 2002 when compared with such achievement in schools with students of similar prior attainment. In 2002 the achievement of these students was in the top five per cent of the country – in 2004 it was well below the national average. The achievement of students awarded grades A*-G has remained well above the national average. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen faster than national trends in recent years and standards across the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science were above the national average in 2004 when compared to all schools. The achievement of students across Years 7 to 9 has been well above average when compared with such achievement in schools with students of similar prior attainment.

The standards of work seen in the current Year 11 are in line with national expectations and this represents good achievement for students, as many of them joined the school with standards below expectations. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with those expected for students of similar age at the end of Year 9, representing good achievement for the majority of students since they joined the school in Year 7.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students achieve well because of good and often very good teaching.
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well because of good support for their learning.
- Boys do not perform to expectations and achieve less than girls in several subjects
- Students' competence in ICT is good and better than in other key skills, although the opportunities for regular use of ICT to enhance work are limited.
- Students' competence in mathematics and in the use of English language and literacy is in line with national expectations, although speaking and listening skills are often insecure and can hinder progress in other curriculum subjects.
- Students' achievement is very good in art and design and drama in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards of work are below national expectations in music, religious education, design and technology, ICT and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
- The achievement of students is often disrupted by the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of students.

Commentary

1. Severn Vale School is located in Gloucester, where there are seven selective grammar schools in the local area. This affects the ability profile of the students. The proportion of students with attainment levels that are below the national average is higher than in other schools although there is a full range of ability in each year. The reputation of the school has improved significantly since the appointment of the headteacher three years ago. Applications to join the school have increased and the proportion of more able students has also risen, although the overall attainment levels remain below the national average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	46 (40)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (95)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.0 (33.4)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 207 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Although GCSE examination results overall have kept up with the national trend of improvement in recent years, the achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 has fallen since 2002 when compared with such achievement in schools that have students with similar prior attainment. The proportion of students awarded grades A*-C in 2002 represented some of the highest achievement in the country when students' prior attainment is considered. These results gained national recognition and in 2003 the school was awarded the Schools Achievement Award. By 2004 this had fallen to being below the national average. In effect, the school has been a victim of its own success in Years 7 to 9, where achievement has been rising faster than the national trend, putting the school into a category of higher-achieving schools. The very successful strategies that have produced rapid improvements in standards at the end of Year 9 have not been fully sustained into Years 10 and 11. The proportion of very good or better teaching seen during the inspection is seven per cent smaller in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The school is very aware of these shortcomings and has implemented a range of intervention strategies. Inspection evidence for the current Years 10 and 11 indicates that these strategies are effective and that standards are improving, particularly in English.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.7 (33.7)	33.5 (33.4)
mathematics	36.2 (35.2)	35.7 (35.4)
science	34.5 (35.0)	33.2 (33.6)

Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The achievement of students is good across the school. It is supported well by a high proportion of good and very good teaching in most subjects. Significant improvement has been made in mathematics and the development of students' skills in numeracy and literacy. These were identified as key areas of weakness at the previous inspection. The national strategy has been very effective in raising the quality of teaching and standards in Years 7 to 9. Standards in ICT have improved significantly and students' competence is now good. Students' achievement is very good in drama and in art and design; the latter was identified as an area for concern at the last inspection. Assessment is very good in English, science, art and design, history, ICT and for the support of pupils with special educational needs. It is good in mathematics and physical education.
4. There are however, pockets of under-achievement.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, with too many unsatisfactory lessons seen across several subjects, result in unsatisfactory learning in these lessons and restrict achievement.
 - A small but significant minority of students have unsatisfactory attitudes to their work and weak teaching fails to engage and motivate them. This creates disruption in lessons that has a negative impact on the learning of these students and of their peers. While the

school has procedures to manage poor behaviour, these are not yet rigorous enough and

are not fully effective in ensuring that learning always takes place in a purposeful classroom environment.

- In several subjects, such as design and technology, history, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, boys' achievement is below expectation. The achievement of these students and many others is restricted by a lack of confidence and competence in speaking and listening.
 - Although the school has been awarded specialist status in technology, there is limited use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in some subjects and this restricts the achievement of all students, particularly boys, and students in Years 10 and 11, who do not achieve the higher levels in their GCSE coursework.
 - The achievement and standards of students in music are unsatisfactory, except for the small numbers studying GCSE courses. A similar picture is seen in modern foreign languages and in religious education in Years 10 and 11. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology and in ICT is below national expectations and below that of other subjects.
5. Students who have special educational needs make very good progress when measured against their prior attainment. Most attain above expectations in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9. Reading and spelling problems are addressed effectively and students improve very well over time. Many achieve a creditable number of passes in GCSE subjects, and in English, many reach standards above average.
 6. The very small number of students who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language do well. They receive good support and teaching and they are making good progress. Lessons, while preparing them for more formal, written English, also teach them how to understand the everyday use of the language. They use newspaper articles to good effect, and bring any difficult words they encounter to the classes so that they can be explained.
 7. The school has identified students who have particular gifts and talents in various aspects of the school's life, for example, gifted musicians, artists or sports people. In addition, students who are likely to achieve higher grades in academic studies are also identified. They make good progress in most of their studies and are challenged to extend their research and writing well. In a few classes where students are arranged in mixed ability groups the teaching does not always plan effectively for the needs of the highest attaining students.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attendance and punctuality are good. The majority of students have good attitudes, values and other personal qualities and contribute very well to the friendly and welcoming ethos of the school. However, the learning of some students is disrupted by the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a small, but significant, minority.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good relationships between students and teachers feature strongly, so that there is a friendly ethos round the school and students' attitudes to learning are mostly very positive.
- While behaviour round the school is orderly and pleasant, a small number of students frequently tend to be disruptive in class, even though the school employs a wide range of strategies to combat this.
- Students are often asked to reflect and give their opinions, and the curriculum effectively promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Attendance has a high profile and is promoted and monitored well.

Commentary

8. As at the time of the previous inspection, students' attitudes to learning are good overall. Most students respond well to the good teaching often provided. In every year group, however, there is a minority of students whose behaviour is challenging or wilfully mischievous. While boys are principally responsible, some girls also lack commitment. As a result, the learning of the class in some lessons fails to measure up to the standard of teaching given. Analysis of both the students' and parents' questionnaires clearly indicates a general unease with standards of behaviour.
9. The school has put much work into reviewing its aims and behaviour policy and into broadening its strategies to deal with disaffection and disobedience. This has included the establishment of an effective Social Inclusion Unit, good work-related learning, an annual 'day of change', which targets under-performing younger students, and advice from specialist support services. These have resulted in some individual improvements but, overall, the number of exclusions for poor behaviour remains very similar to the high levels noted at the previous inspection. It is also not uncommon for some students to be sent to 'referral' internally; a few of these are regular and frequent visitors to the 'referral' base. Bullying is generally reckoned to be dealt with satisfactorily once reported. Greater incisiveness and consistency are needed in the school's behaviour policy and its application, including early review and action in all cases where behaviour is beginning to fall short of the high standards needed and expected by students.
10. Personal development for the majority of students is promoted well. The school is fully inclusive, and those with special educational needs consider themselves well integrated and supported. Students' views are often canvassed. Most students value the good personal and social education programme they receive, and in the wider curriculum, very good inputs into spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are made in art and English. History, geography, drama, music, physical education, and ICT also contribute well. This is supported by a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as the acclaimed Youth Action Group operating in the community. Within school, peer mentoring between students is valued, and Year 10 students have to apply with serious intention to be selected as prefects in Year 11.
11. Attendance has risen since the previous inspection and is now ahead of the national average. The school signals clear and high standards to parents, refusing permission for holidays, for instance, for those students whose attendance is deemed too low, and those within key examination periods. This code is monitored closely and consistently enforced, thus resulting in a real benefit to students' attainment.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.5	School data	0.7
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1023	144	3
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	12	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	29	12	2
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	13	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	10	1	0
Black or Black British – African	5	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	9	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	8	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	1	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education that ensures that standards at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11 are rising. Teaching is good, leading to good learning by students. The curriculum, support for students' welfare and guidance, links with parents and the community, leadership and management are also good. Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. The quality of assessment is good. There is a higher proportion of very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Some of the best teaching is in English.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- A small but significant proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory.
- The school has implemented several initiatives to improve teaching and learning and the national strategy in Years 7 to 9 has been particularly effective.
- A significant minority of students provide a low level of disruption in lessons and some teachers do not manage behaviour in a consistent and successful manner.
- Assessment for learning is very good in some subjects.
- A small number of teachers are not marking work regularly and helpfully, in order that students may know what they must do to improve their work.

Commentary

12. The school has been successful in improving the quality of its teaching since the previous inspection during a time of rapid growth. The proportion of good or better teaching has risen by six per cent and very good teaching by four per cent. However, the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has increased marginally. A small but significant percentage of unsatisfactory lessons was seen, across several subjects and involving several teachers.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 134 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (2%)	36 (27%)	58 (44%)	24 (18%)	10 (8%)	1 (1%)	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages.

13. The school has a comprehensive teaching and learning programme of initiatives, which has involved teachers from across the whole school. This focus on teaching and learning has enabled the school to identify areas for improvement and to address these with measures such as 'Assessment for Learning', work on accelerated learning and encouraging students to think for themselves. It has also instituted the very successful 'coaching' programme, for both newly qualified teachers and those with experience who are ready to take on new ideas. The introduction and establishment of the Key Stage 3 national strategy is clearly effective in bringing about an improvement in teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 where standards in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science have improved at a rate faster than the national trend. The teaching methods encouraged by this strategy are now starting to have a positive effect on the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11, where the standard of work of the current students shows some improvement on recent years.
14. The majority of teachers have good command of their subjects and insist on high standards, in the classroom and for homework and coursework. A very strong feature of the teaching is the encouragement and enjoyment passed on by many teachers to their students, which often eliminates potential disengagement as students become involved and interested in their work. Teachers plan work that is interesting and devise sequences of activities that help students to develop the skills and understanding that they need to achieve the lesson objectives. There is a good range of teaching and learning strategies in most lessons; these are varied between whole-class work, group work and independent work. This helps students to develop learning and social skills such as teamwork and discussion skills. Relationships between teachers and their students are usually good, helping good learning.
15. The school is very aware of under-performance by boys in several subjects and has implemented some intervention strategies in recent years, with a focus on boys' achievement, particularly in design and technology. Two areas for development in teaching that are having a significant impact on students' achievement, particularly that of boys, include speaking and listening and the use of ICT. The school has been largely successful in meeting the requirement of the previous inspection to focus on weaknesses in writing, and students' skills in both reading and writing are in line with national expectations. However, many students are unable to articulate their ideas clearly in question and answer sessions and listening skills are often weak. The school has invested funds from the Specialist Schools Initiative in ICT equipment, and whilst growing numbers of teachers are using interactive whiteboards to enhance their teaching, the coursework of students in Years 10 and 11 shows little evidence of improved levels through the effective use of ICT.
16. In the lessons provided by specialist teachers and assistants for students who have special educational needs, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. In mainstream classes, teaching and support are good. There are a few shortcomings where support staff concentrate on one student and do not help others sufficiently. In addition, they do not always

support the teacher well enough in dealing with unsatisfactory attitudes from one or two students. However, the majority of support is good.

17. Although very able students are challenged in some subjects, there are a number of subjects where they are not extended to their full potential. This is particularly so in mixed ability classes, where students have a wide range of needs and abilities. The school has addressed this issue in recent years, but it is not yet common practice across all departments.
18. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in art and design in Years 7 to 11 and good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, history, geography, drama, physical education and citizenship throughout the school. It is satisfactory in religious education, modern foreign languages and design and technology, and unsatisfactory in music. Much of the unsatisfactory teaching was seen in music and at least one lesson was seen in each of religious education, mathematics, personal and social education, modern foreign languages and design and technology. In many departments the quality of teaching varies widely. Whilst in nearly three quarters of lessons observed the quality of teaching was good, and very good in almost one third, there remains some inconsistency of quality across the school.
19. Overall, learning is well supported by assessment. Assessment is very good in five subjects, good in two and satisfactory in the remainder. It is used well to formulate and monitor the school improvement plan and there is now wide use across most subjects of assessment to raise standards and modify teaching. This is particularly strong in history and art, where the very good systems of assessment incorporate self-evaluation by the students and modification of teaching strategies to ensure that planning matches the changing needs of the students.
20. However, assessment is unsatisfactory in some areas of design and technology, particularly in Years 10 and 11, where the students are not always fully informed of how well they are progressing. There are also weaknesses in the procedures operating in geography, modern foreign languages and religious education, where there is too much variation in marking. Some teachers lack the necessary confidence to use assessment data despite regular training on assessment. The assessment of students with special educational needs is very good. A wide range of data is used to track their achievement from the time they enter the school. This includes analyses of reading age, examination results in both primary and secondary schools and educational research data. As a result, their needs are accurately planned for in lessons and the students have a very clear understanding of how they might improve.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum for students in Years 7 to 11, enriched with good provision of extra-curricular activities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a good range of appropriate and relevant courses that meet the needs of all its students.
- Very good planning and regular monitoring and review of the curriculum ensure continuous high quality curriculum development and innovation.
- The provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because there is not enough time devoted to the subject.
- A daily act of collective worship is not provided for students.
- Cross-curricular ICT provision for students in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

21. The school has effectively translated its vision of meeting individual learning needs into a good quality curriculum for all students. Students are offered four pathways after Year 9 and given good guidance on which choice will best meet their needs. Improvements since the last inspection have been good.
22. Students in Years 7 to 9 have a good curriculum. The national strategy is firmly in place in many subjects. The school is very conscious of the need to promote independent learning, and all students at some time in Years 7 to 9 have lessons that are designed to promote independent thinking skills. The impact of the work done to improve provision for students in Years 7 to 9 is reflected in the rising standards at the end of Year 9.
23. The school has a very imaginative approach to curriculum planning and innovation. The very good promotion of initiatives such as Assessment for Learning, Electronic and Interactive revision service, and the development of an applied ICT course, has had a significant impact on standards in art and design, history and science.
24. The school does not make provision for all students to participate in a daily act of collective worship and so is in breach of statutory requirements. This was identified in the previous inspection. The school has a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education (called CSP). Citizenship is well planned and an imaginative use of themed days and weeks augments the contribution made through the subjects of the curriculum and CSP lessons. Students generally see the relevance of the topics covered, and are appreciative of the contribution made to their wider education. The quality of careers information is good and the links with Stroud College add breadth to the schools' vocational provision. Students feel well informed about the options open to them beyond the age of sixteen, which are well supported by the very good links with providers of sixteen plus education.
25. Provision overall for students who have special educational needs is good. It is very good in the department's specialist classroom. Here students receive very well structured lessons to support their progress in literacy and numeracy. In mainstream classes, students are well supported overall, but this is not consistently so in all classes. The school does not monitor the quality of support in lessons with sufficient rigour.
26. The school provides a good range of activities to support students' learning outside the school day and the majority of students take advantage of these facilities. Provision for sport and the arts are good. Good numbers of students, across all years, are involved in workshops, festivals and musical productions. Students are successful in a range of sporting activities, sometimes at national level. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to art galleries, theatres and museums and through field trips. There are yearly visits abroad to enhance learning in French, Spanish and physical education. There is good provision for students to extend their learning through regular study support sessions, revision classes, homework club and weekly subject clubs. Visits by a range of experts from outside the school are well established and productive. Students are involved in a number of community projects and provide good support to many local and national charities. The co-ordinator closely monitors the quality of provision and participation rates in activities. The short lunchtime is a constraint on the expansion of sporting activities and there are few residential experiences for students.
27. The school is proud of its promotion of an inclusive curriculum that provides opportunities for students of all abilities to succeed. The social inclusion unit within the school is effective in this regard, although the number of students who benefit from this facility is limited.
28. There is a good match of staff to cover the curriculum and to ensure that all students are taught effectively. The school does not have particular difficulties in recruiting good quality staff and there are effective teams of staff in almost all departments. The mobility of staff is broadly average, although it varies from year to year, with most changes due to promotion, retirement or family reasons. Subject specialists undertake almost all teaching, so that,

overall, staffing provision is good. There is generally a sufficient number of very good quality technical and other support staff within the school.

29. Accommodation is good. Many teaching rooms are large and attractive and have been improved greatly by new building since the previous inspection. Accommodation is particularly good in mathematics, modern foreign languages and ICT. It is excellent in physical education. Entrance areas and offices are very good and make a significant contribution to the welcoming ethos of the school. The library is too small, but it is soon to be replaced by a large multimedia learning centre. Some corridors and stairways are narrow requiring students to move between lessons in a particularly orderly manner so as to avoid disruption and maintain safety. The majority of students respond very well to these requirements.
30. Resources are good. They are very good in science, physical education and in ICT, where improvement has been rapid. There is a good supply of books and many departments have new interactive whiteboards, although not all teachers feel competent in using them. Within the ICT department, and in science, ICT equipment levels are very good, but they are variable in other subjects, including history, geography and modern foreign languages where there are not enough computers.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides effectively for the welfare of its students. Personal support, advice and guidance are generally good, but poor behaviour and attitudes among a small minority of students are not tackled sufficiently well. The school frequently consults its students and makes good use of their suggestions.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use good assessment procedures to promote learning and the systematic discussion of targets.
- Tutors move through the school with their tutor groups and this usually builds good personal knowledge and respect.
- Many strategies and support programmes exist to help students cope with disadvantages and school pressures, but measures to deal with the attitudes and behaviour of a few students are not always firm and consistent enough.
- Careful induction arrangements, extensive personal, relationships and health education, and good careers guidance effectively foster a climate of security and support.
- Good procedures are in place for students' care and welfare.
- Students are consulted often and widely. Their opinions are valued and have led to many improvements.

Commentary

31. Students speak well of the friendly guidance they get from teachers. They value the self-assessment and personal interview with their tutor in the half-yearly academic monitoring and counselling days. All students understand the national levels they are working at. They are pleased with the level of support available within school and are generally confident enough to ask for help when necessary.
32. The school takes care to know its students well, for instance by visiting all of its many partner primary schools before students join and taking sensitive account of individuals' needs. Support provided for students with identified special educational needs is good. Effective monitoring of support plans also takes place for the few students in public care. The Social Inclusion Unit has a very positive impact on re-integrating students and improving confidence and social skills, including anger management, in students whose attitudes and actions give real concern. The school has sensibly organised itself to expand its capacity to cater for these needs, and has further measures in hand to tackle bullying. Older students are pleased with

the advice, opportunities and help provided for further study and preparation for the world of work.

33. Child protection procedures are well established and understood within the school, though a governor has not been appointed for this function. A committee of the governing body effectively oversees health and safety. The policy has recently been revised and appropriate safety checks and repairs are made. Ongoing improvements are appropriately planned for students' toilets.
34. Systematic consultation with students is well established, through year councils linked with the school council, leading to many improvements. Students' opinions are also canvassed and sampled well beyond these formal arrangements, for instance in guiding behaviour policy, monitoring school catering, and in judging the quality of teachers applying for teaching posts.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed good links with parents. Community links are good, with some very good features, and links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides parents with much helpful information about the school and its expectations. It is welcoming, keeping parents regularly updated about events and their children's progress. Consequently, most parents respond supportively and well.
- Broad community links are well established and are effective in enriching students' experiences and understanding.
- A very wide range of links with other schools and education providers, often sharing expertise, provides much cohesive support.

Commentary

35. The school has increased its reputation since the previous inspection, is seen to be active in the community, and is oversubscribed, despite strong local competition. Parents generally are very satisfied with what the school provides. They like the encouragement given. Their support is shown by the high response to the inspection questionnaire and by the good attendance levels maintained by students.
36. Good opportunities for tracking students' progress are provided by two parents' evenings, targets and levels recorded in planners, and by the possibility of attending two academic monitoring meetings annually. The latter are primarily for students' benefit and held during the day. Parents find it valuable to attend if they can, though many cannot. Some parents feel that the school is slow to alert parents to a decline of attitude or performance but, when mentioned, staff are keen to support and follow up the comment. Written academic reports are of satisfactory standard, and give an indication of progress and the standard of work achieved by each student, by reference to National Curriculum levels in most subjects.
37. The gaining of technology status has given a significant boost to the school's links with the community and its educational partners. Help of various sorts is now received from the technology college commercial sponsors, with a GCSE project in ICT, for example. The new equipment is also used to provide part of a range of popular evening classes and to provide e-learning opportunities. The community is used well for a wide range of contributions to the wider curriculum, such as charity and Youth Action work, and effective use is made of the local business links' consortium for work experience and mock interviews.

38. Work with educational partners has also expanded well. Liaison with partner primary schools is very strong. Students benefit by curricular links, for example, in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages. Similarly, very helpful liaison takes place with many secondary schools and colleges, to the benefit of older students. These provide a range of opportunities covering, for instance, good vocational experience and individual placements, as well as group sports events and 'taster' sessions in further education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is good and he is well supported by his senior and middle managers. The work of the governing body is satisfactory. Management of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vision for improvement held by the headteacher is a particular strength of the school.
- The school has a well developed culture of self evaluation.
- Many middle managers have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. However, leadership and management of modern foreign languages and music are unsatisfactory, as is management of religious education.
- The management roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team are not fully effective in monitoring with sufficient rigour school policies such as teaching and behaviour.
- The governing body does not ensure the school fulfils its statutory duties in some regards.

Commentary

39. The headteacher has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and he has a clear vision of what is needed to raise standards. He has worked hard to involve all staff in an important period of change and improvement in the school. Notable achievements include raising standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9, gaining specialist Technology College status and over-subscription of students in Year 7. His consultative approach and committed leadership have empowered many teachers to evaluate current practices and, in particular, to improve the quality of teaching and learning. He is trusted and respected by the governors, teachers, parents and students. He is well regarded in the local area and has developed valuable links with the community and neighbouring schools. However, he needs to be more rigorous in his demands on, and expectations of, staff and students.
40. The senior leadership team of headteacher, deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers and business manager is an appropriate number for a school of this size. They are experienced within their clearly defined roles and work well as a team. However, there is not an equal distribution of tasks and, as a result, the assistant headteachers do not always fulfil an effective strategic role in their position. The current situation is not wholly efficient, with much expertise remaining untapped. The current system of line management of all departments is not the most effective way to monitor the quality of teaching in the school. The next stage of development requires a more rigorous system for reviewing performance across all areas of the school.
41. The good leadership provided by the headteacher and members of the leadership team has led to improvements in the school. They are committed to running an inclusive school, and considerable time and effort are invested in those students who do not respond well to school. In particular, the school has set up the Social Inclusion Unit to help students who have faced difficulty with mainstream school or have been involved in minor disruption in lessons. The leadership team is aware that a small minority of students still display unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons that has an adverse effect on the learning of other students. This issue

is key to ensuring more rapid and effective improvement in the school. The leadership team also has an urgent task of developing effective strategies to address the issue of unsatisfactory teaching in a small, but significant, number of lessons.

42. Subject and pastoral leadership are mainly good. In many subjects leadership is very good. Subject leaders have been responsible for identifying the vision for improvement in their areas of responsibility. Departments have been encouraged to develop a culture of self-evaluation and improvement through change, and this reflective approach is having a positive effect on students' achievement. However, leadership and management of modern foreign languages and music are unsatisfactory, because there is too much unsatisfactory teaching and insufficient improvement since the last inspection. While the leadership of religious education is good, management has failed to deal with some weak teaching and the subject remains in breach of statutory requirements that were identified in the previous inspection report.
43. Management generally is good, with a strong focus on raising standards. The day-to-day administration of the school enables the school to run smoothly. The school's policies are effective in identifying a clear vision for improving the school. Less effective is the consistent implementation of these policies. For example, there are clear expectations for teaching and behaviour, but there is a lack of consistency in implementation across the school. The behaviour policies and procedures in the school are not effective in supporting students' achievement. The school improvement plan is well written. The plan identifies appropriate issues for improvement and for each issue there are clear strategies with identified criteria for success. Teachers are fully involved in the writing of the plan and each department has clear targets, action plans and success criteria. Monitoring the work of the school is well developed and departmental progress is evaluated through team reviews. The school is monitoring all areas of the specialist school programme and using additional funds effectively. Target setting and the monitoring of achievement are well established for individual students. Departments are increasingly using assessment data, but they are not always managing it to identify future changes in practice.
44. Leadership and management of the provision for special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator gives very freely of her time despite a very demanding timetable. There is therefore no time for her to observe and monitor support in lessons. This is unsatisfactory. It is a matter of whole-school organisation rather than that within the department. The co-ordinator is very experienced, calm and efficient in her organisation of the department, and leads a very strong team.
45. The professional development of staff is very good and the school is strongly committed to improving the expertise of all staff. Performance management is well established in the school, with lesson observations forming an integral part of the system. Subject leaders are directly responsible for team members and review meetings are closely linked to the personal and professional development of teachers. The school is involved in a coaching initiative led by an assistant headteacher and two Advanced Skills Teachers that encourages the sharing of best practice within the school. There are also clearly defined and supportive appraisal arrangements for the support staff. The school has developed a robust system of recruitment and induction for new staff. Financial management is very good and is closely linked to the school's educational priorities. The principles of best value are central to the school's management and use of resources.
46. The governance of the school is satisfactory. 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 challenge to the school. They are fully involved in the planning and evaluation of the school improvement plan. All governors are attached to a subcommittee and each governor shares attendance at the student disciplinary committee. However, the governing body has failed to ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties as the school contravenes the regulations on the daily act of worship. In addition, the school does not comply with

National Curriculum requirements in religious studies and ICT in Years 10 and 11. Two of these breaches were reported at the previous inspection.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,782,454	Balance from previous year	178,092
Total expenditure	3,577,097	Balance carried forward to the next	205,357
Expenditure per student	3,261		

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are an effective development plan and audit, and leadership and management are good.
- The opportunities for the students who attend college courses are very good.
- ASDAN bronze award makes a significant contribution to work related learning.
- Careers advice and work experience are well organised.
- There is only limited provision for vocational examination courses across Years 10 to 11.

Commentary

47. The school provides a good range of work-related activities and study. There is an effective audit of what is provided, together with clearly thought out ideas for improvement. For example, the further coverage of work-related learning by individual subjects is an area identified for some development by the school.
48. Students are prepared well for the world of work. They keep good records of what they do and the progress they make. Year 10 students have an efficiently planned and monitored week of work experience. Careers advice is good and students appreciate the help given in choosing the next steps in their lives, whether towards employment or further study. All the students interviewed know what their next step is and are very happy with their choices. Those students who attend Stroud College one day each week have very good opportunities to sample such courses as building crafts or motor vehicle work. The beauty course offered there is very impressive, with the chance to work with clients, and an insistence on students' good appearance and presentation. Those students who follow an ASDAN course, towards a bronze award, incorporate work-related learning well in their studies. For example, Year 10 students were seen in a business enterprise simulation where they had to arrange the manufacture, quality control and marketing of a product. They learnt well from this hands-on experience. Several are aiming at work or courses related to these topics.
49. Work-related learning is found across the range of subjects in the curriculum. For example, in technology, students learn about health and safety in the work place; in history, they study the industrial revolution and modern work practices. In physical education, some students gain coaching qualifications and work with students from other schools. They learn how art can be useful when choosing a career path. Other opportunities include interview situations in preparation for the world of work. Students learn how to apply for jobs, write a 'curriculum vitae' about themselves and decide what questions to ask at interviews.
50. The leadership and management of this area of the curriculum are good. Much thought has gone into what is offered and it is well planned. The audit of what each subject offers is

comprehensive and provides a clear picture of what can be expected across the school. However, only two GCSE courses are offered within the vocational range. These are applied ICT and health and social care. This is not a broad enough choice and does not include courses related to other vocational subjects such as business education or leisure and tourism.

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

- Standards are above the national average in Years 9 and 11 and students achieve well because teaching and learning are good.
- The procedures for, and use of, assessment are very good and the subject is led very well.
- Skills in speaking and listening require further development.
- Although students' attitudes are good overall, behaviour management is not sufficiently effective in some lessons.

Commentary

51. Students joining the school have below average standards in English. In the 2004 national tests for Year 9, standards were above the national average. Students clearly achieved very well. Standards observed during the inspection are above average. In 2004, results in GCSE English language were close to the national average and they were well above in literature. Almost all students are now taking English literature. Students achieved very well. Although girls outperform boys, particularly in literature, there is no evidence of major differences in achievement. Standards in the present Year 11 are above average and there are clear strengths in coursework, where students achieve very well. The overall trend is one of clear improvement, with standards across the school being consistently above average, but other subjects do not have literacy objectives clearly integrated into their planning.
52. Students achieve well because of the good quality of teaching and their positive and enthusiastic attitudes in the majority of students and lessons. The good quality of support ensures that students with special needs often achieve very well. Higher-attaining students achieve well because of the setting system and the focus on providing appropriate tasks and resources. Attitudes are good overall, although standards of behaviour are lower in some classes. The progress of some students in Years 10 and 11 is affected by poor attendance and unsatisfactory behaviour.
53. Speaking and listening skills are in line with national expectations in both Years 9 and 11. There are some good opportunities for the development of these skills in pair or group work and in discussion. Drama lessons make a valuable contribution. Individuals participate confidently in lessons, but too many students do not listen attentively and cannot contribute fluently. By Years 10 and 11 the majority can make their views clear and some are confident and articulate, but a minority are not secure in expressing their ideas and opinions in an appropriate way. In some lessons, underdeveloped listening skills mean that students do not understand how to complete tasks and are not able to participate well in discussion.
54. Reading and comprehension skills are developed well and standards are above expectation by Year 9. Individual students show high-level skills and the majority have sound skills in researching for information and in reading comprehension, although their vocabulary is sometimes limited. This development is sustained and the majority of students have the reading skills required for success at GCSE. Students achieve well in reading because there are regular reading sessions in tutor periods and lower-attaining students in Years 7 and 8 attend reading clubs and paired reading sessions. Wider reading is encouraged; students are

taught how to use the library and students write book reviews to persuade others to read their favourite books.

55. The quality of writing is well above national expectation by Year 9. In Years 7 to 9 higher-attaining students write very well; their work is fluent, varied and interesting. There are some errors in basic punctuation and spelling in the work of average and lower-attaining students and some work is untidy. However, because of students' skills in drafting and redrafting and the effective use of ICT, final pieces of work are usually of at least a good standard. In Years 10 and 11 students' coursework is well planned and well constructed and is clearly based on a good knowledge and understanding of the examination texts. There is evidence of good creative writing across the ability range and students are able to write in a variety of ways to suit their audience and purpose. Homework tasks are used well to develop skills in writing and research. High quality displays are a strong feature of the department. They show the high standard of students' work and provide information that helps students to improve.
56. The teaching and learning observed ranged from satisfactory to excellent and both are good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are planned well. The best lessons provide exceptionally good support for lower-attaining students, enabling them to make excellent gains in learning, even when working on challenging poetry or difficult passages from Shakespeare. There is some inconsistency with regard to expectations of work and behaviour and not all teachers have the strategies to deal with lower-attaining students who fail to behave as well as they should. There is a very clear focus on raising standards in reading and writing, but not yet on encouraging higher standards in speaking and listening. Marking is regular and constructive and helps students improve. Assessment procedures are very good and available information is used very well. Relationships are generally good and students particularly enjoy work in drama and poetry. Teachers use a range of strategies to support the learning of all students and plan lessons and homework well to enable students to build on previous learning. Higher-attaining students are challenged by the texts and approaches used. The department is well resourced and teachers use poetry anthologies particularly well. Computers are used effectively and in one lesson the use of the interactive whiteboard was particularly successful in helping students understand what is meant by segregation. However, not all teachers have the confidence to exploit this valuable resource to the full.
57. Management is good. The recently appointed head of department is an effective manager of a large department of eleven. Available support assistants and teachers have been deployed to provide good assistance for lower-attaining and special needs students. Good teamwork and careful monitoring of students' progress are key features of this successful and well-managed department, but there is still some inconsistency in teaching. The subject is very well led and there is a clear understanding of the areas for development now that issues related to standards in writing have been addressed. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good in that standards, resources, accommodation and assessment have all clearly improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. Literacy skills across the school meet national expectations. Standards are often good or better in writing in the higher sets, but students in lower sets do not have secure spelling and punctuation skills. Reading skills are secure for the majority and most students have at least sound research skills. However, speaking and listening is less secure for some students in average and lower sets and students do not listen carefully enough in discussions or to instructions given by their teachers. Within the English department there is a clear focus on raising standards in basic skills, particularly spelling, but other subjects do not have literacy objectives that are clearly integrated into the planning.
59. Some departments, notably science and history, are making a valuable contribution to improving standards in writing. Some particularly effective approaches to language were seen in science lessons, including the use of role-play to ensure that students understood new

vocabulary. However, other subjects, including design and technology and modern foreign languages, are failing to use opportunities to develop skills in literacy, particularly in oral work. Most subjects display key vocabulary and provide writing frames and opportunities for extended writing. The co-ordination of literacy across the curriculum has been well developed and provision is good. Teachers have benefited from the support of local education authority advisors and the opportunity to attend courses.

60. The library is used well by some departments and is well supported by the school library service. It is managed well. However, borrowing rates are low and the short lunchtime allows little time for students' use. A good range of new fiction has been purchased recently, but there are no newspapers or magazines.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are not high enough in French and Spanish at GCSE and achievement is not as rapid as it should be.
- The Key Stage 3 national strategy has been well implemented in Years 7 to 9.
- Neither assessment nor graded work is used well enough to meet students' individual needs.
- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory overall.
- The attitudes to learning of a significant minority of students are disaffected, leading to some disruptive behaviour, which wastes the time of teachers and other students.

Commentary

61. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory in French and Spanish. There has been little improvement in standards and achievement, girls are still achieving more highly than boys, there is still too little use of the target language in the teaching, marking is inconsistent and leadership and management are not ensuring that changes and staff development are helping to raise standards.
62. GCSE examination results at grades A*-C in 2004 in French and Spanish were below the national average, as they have been for several years. Although the numbers entered for a language are high compared with those in schools nationally, approximately half the cohort, and the majority of students attain a grade between A* - G, the proportion gaining the higher A* - C grades is low in French and very low in Spanish. In both languages, girls attained far better than boys, a persistent problem. The results were below those for similar schools. There has been a very high turnover of teaching staff since the last inspection, including the head of department.
63. Students' current standards of attainment in French in Years 7 to 9 are close to being in line with the nationally expected standards and their achievement is satisfactory. This is largely a result of the way in which the recently appointed teacher for Years 7 to 9 in the department has influenced the planning and teaching of the national strategy. Students' understanding of the foreign language is just satisfactory, but their pronunciation is weak and their vocabulary thin; this also hinders their reading skills, as does their lack of grammatical knowledge. Writing is often slow and inaccurate. Students study either French or Spanish and have no opportunity to study both languages.

64. In the current Year 11, students' standards are below those expected nationally. Their oral work is well below standard, their reading and listening work still suffers from too little breadth of vocabulary and knowledge of grammatical and structural forms, and the written work of many students is too often brief and immature.
65. Teaching and learning in French and Spanish are satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9, although some good and very good lessons were observed. In Years 10 and 11, however, although teaching is still satisfactory overall, learning is not, because of the slow pace dictated by the need for constant management of behaviour. The strengths of the teaching are the encouragement teachers offer students and the planning of lessons, which is carefully aimed at improving all the required key skills in a varied and interesting manner. Too many teachers, however, find it difficult to deal with the disaffection and disengagement found in many classes and the subsequent low level of disruptive behaviour, which absorbs teachers' time and effort and hinders the learning of those who wish to achieve. For the same reason, the pace of lessons is often too slow, so that the objectives of the lessons are not reached in full. Teachers are competent in their knowledge of both languages, but many use the target language too little to give directions, explain tasks and encourage students in their oral work, so that students do not become familiar with everyday structures and vocabulary. Despite the fact that there is some ability setting in most years, work is not always graded to meet the needs of individual students, especially those of the higher-attaining students, who can become bored in lessons and are often insufficiently stretched. Marking is inconsistent and lacks rigour.
66. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Aspirations and expectations of what students could achieve is limited and there is a lack of clear vision as to the way ahead for raising standards and dealing with problems such as the achievement of boys. Although teaching is monitored and observed, there is limited sharing of good practice in consistent behaviour management in classes. There has been a degree of innovation that is beginning to make itself felt in signs of improvement in Years 7 to 9. Assessment and analysis of school data and results of examination attainment targets are not yet being used as well as possible to help extend each pupil to full potential. There is too little regular contact with native speakers, visits abroad, and the use of foreign language assistants in classes to contribute well to students' cultural development. Opportunities for using ICT are limited, but are rapidly improving.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are increasing significantly year by year.
- The quality of teaching is good, with a very high proportion of very good lessons.
- Teachers insist on good behaviour in their classes and, as a result, students' attitudes to learning are usually good or very good.
- The match of teachers to the curriculum is very good; the department is very well staffed with qualified and experienced teachers.
- The quality of leadership of mathematics is very good.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.

Commentary

67. Results at the end of Year 11 were below the national average in GCSE examinations in 2004, with boys at a level below it and girls just below. There has been a significantly improving trend in the examination results since the time of the last inspection. The percentage of students passing at grades A*-C has nearly doubled since 2000, and increased in 2004 to the highest level ever achieved by the school. The percentages of boys and girls

who passed at grades A*-G were both above the national averages. The percentage of the very highest grades, A* and A, was near to the national average, with girls performing above the national average for all girls. In 2004, students performed better than in most other subjects in the school, and relatively better than in English and science. The recent results show good achievement by students, who joined the school with overall attainment levels below national averages.

68. National test results at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average when compared with those of all schools in 2004, which is a vast improvement on the results at the time of the last inspection. These results, in comparison with those of similar schools, based on the prior attainment of students when they joined the school, were also in line with national averages. Both higher-attaining and average-attaining students performed at above expected levels when compared with pupils in all schools and in similar schools, which is an improvement on the last inspection, when these students were reaching levels well below expectations. Girls performed above the levels of boys. The mathematics results have been below those of English and science.
69. Students enter the school with levels of attainment in mathematics that are below the national average. By Year 9, standards of work seen are generally in line with and slightly above national averages. Higher-attaining students describe correlations using the correct mathematical vocabulary; they learn about matching correlations and examine the effects of combining correlations. This work is very challenging. Average students expand brackets with confidence, and change the subject of formulae showing good understanding of the principles involved. Lower-attaining students and students with special educational needs have weak knowledge of basic tables and directed numbers, but use correct probability notation. They calculate relative frequencies and demonstrate good achievement.
70. Higher-attaining students in Year 11 easily use Pythagoras' theorem in a 'starter' to a lesson. They use the sine rule confidently to calculate the lengths of sides and the angles of triangles, showing high levels of algebraic and numeracy skills. Their work is in line with that normally associated with top sets in Year 11, and the curriculum offered is very demanding. Middle-attaining students draw graphs accurately, and find the coordinates of intersection of two straight lines. They solve simultaneous equations by graphical methods and by algebraic substitution. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs study a wide range of mathematics, but have weak numeracy skills. Work is neatly presented and students take pride in their mathematics. Students make a good effort with their coursework. All students have a clear idea about their target grades and the tier of examination in which they are to be entered.
71. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good. Almost all lessons observed are at least satisfactory; over three-quarters are good or very good. This is a much higher proportion than at the last inspection, when over one-third of lessons had shortcomings. However, a small proportion of lessons were unsatisfactory. Significantly, over half of the lessons seen are very good. Teachers' command of mathematics is very good. Their lesson planning varies in quality, and time is not always managed effectively. They give very strong encouragement to students and develop very positive relationships with them. Teachers expect students to work very hard; in many lessons, there is very high challenge through a very well constructed curriculum. This is a significant change to the last inspection, when expectations were not high enough. Practical materials and computers are not used enough by students in lessons. However, with guidance from their teachers, students are becoming competent users of the new interactive whiteboards. They are keen to use the new electronic boards, and regularly volunteer to demonstrate their mathematical knowledge to the rest of the class.

72. Several three-part lessons were seen, which follow the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, teachers do not generally leave enough time for a thorough conclusion at the ends of the lessons. These sessions are needed to confirm the knowledge and skills gained during the lesson. Teachers control students very well. This leads to mature behaviour, positive attitudes to studying and good achievement in lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are very good; students enjoy their mathematics, respond very well to challenges from teachers and work enthusiastically.
73. Assessment of students' work is good. Teachers mark students' work very thoroughly, and comments enable students to see what they need to do to improve. The department keeps very detailed records of test and assessment results and substantial data on students' grades over several years. These are carefully analysed.
74. The leadership of the mathematics department is very strong. The head of department has a clear vision and very high aspirations for the department; he leads by example in his teaching and is extremely well organised. He clearly identifies objectives for continual improvement, and understands the emphasis that is placed on improving attainment. The schemes of work have been totally revised, and a very high quality curriculum document produced for use by all mathematics teachers. Management is good. The head of department monitors teaching, but this is not yet rigorous enough. The analysis and use of data on students' attainment are good and improving. A very good team effort is developing, with the sharing of expertise on the use of new technologies, especially the interactive whiteboards. There are high aspirations to improve standards even further.
75. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Attainment is increasing significantly year on year. The behaviour of students and their relationships with teachers are now very good in most classes. Teaching has improved significantly and teachers in the department are working together very well as a team.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. A whole-school policy on the use of mathematics across the curriculum has been issued to all teachers. The mathematics teachers have provided in-service training to all staff in the ways in which numeracy can be used in their subject areas. This included the use of calculators, but there is also a focus on mental strategies.
77. In science, students' numeracy skills offer good support in all years. Very good graphs are used in biology to show the rate of photosynthesis against the light intensity. In ICT, students use formulae in spreadsheets, and extensive calculations involving brackets. In design and technology, accurate measurement is seen. The art and design department highlight proportion and perspective. In geography, students use tables and graphs well, and analyse statistics to a high standard. Numeracy is well promoted in physical education, where students measure and record heart rates in health-related fitness education. Students are very competent in looking up Bible references in religious education. Students with special educational needs use the Successmaker program to enhance their numeracy skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 in recent years have been below expectations.
- Teaching is good and results in good achievement.
- Assessment of students' achievement is very good, allowing very good monitoring of their progress.
- The department is very well led and there are clear strategies for continued improvement.

- Resources are very good and enrich the quality of teaching and learning.
- A minority of students have an unsatisfactory attitude towards learning which does disrupt the learning of others.

Commentary

78. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average in 2004. They have improved considerably since the previous inspection and have remained above the national average for the last six years. The results are above those of students in similar schools, based on their relative achievement in Year 6. Girls did slightly better than boys.
79. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations in double award science were below the national average. Girls did better than boys both in the A* to C range and also in the higher grades of A* and A. The results were lowest in 2003 because of staffing problems, but have improved considerably over the last year.
80. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement for many students in relation to when they entered the school. This includes those with special educational needs and the few students whose home language is not English. Students are enthusiastic and confident when doing practical work. They observe well and use data accurately. Good strategies are used by both teachers and teaching assistants, so that students of all abilities show increasingly good literacy skills which support their understanding of science. The addition of thinking skills to the curriculum is encouraging the students to ask more probing questions about why things happen in science.
81. Standards in the current Year 11 are above expectations, reflecting the improvement since the examinations in 2004. Students show good skills of enquiry. They are able to work independently and co-operatively with equal degrees of confidence. However, the learning of the majority is sometimes disrupted by a minority who have an unsatisfactory attitude to learning. These students have poorly developed listening and social skills and their immature interruptions slow down their progress and that of their more industrious peers. Practical skills have continued to improve. Students collect, manipulate and analyse data skilfully and can recognise anomalous results. Higher-attaining students have a good command of scientific vocabulary, which allows them to confidently express themselves clearly in both written work and orally. Average and below average attainers are less confident with their speaking skills.
82. Teaching is good. Strong features of the most effective teaching are the assessment of students' achievement, the effective use of time and planning. Assessment informing students how to improve is very good. Teachers check students' understanding in class with searching questions. These are structured carefully so that they provoke students to think deeply before answering. This improves the accuracy of their responses. Planning is improved by the sharing of new ideas and good practice. This widens the range of teaching strategies and helps to raise standards. This, together with early identification of underachievement, is a major contribution in the push to raise standards in GCSE science. Modular test results indicate that good progress is being made in raising standards, and the quality of practical coursework has improved considerably over the last two years.
83. The department is very well led and well managed and there is a strong focus on raising standards and a shared understanding within the department of how this may be done. Since the previous inspection the department has suffered staffing problems that caused a drop in the GCSE results. There is now stability, with a full team of specialist science teachers, and standards are improving. There is a very clear vision for future improvement. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning lacks rigour but all teachers have been observed in class and strengths and weaknesses identified. New teachers are very well supported and are quickly assimilated into the department.

84. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Accommodation improvements have enabled the department to teach more effectively, resulting in improved learning. Improvements in ICT have included the interactive whiteboards, which add considerable visual impact to students' learning. Resources are very good and there is a wealth of modern textbooks. These provide opportunities for home study or research and to reinforce the good work done in lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in Year 9 tests in 2004 were below average and GCSE examination results in 2004 were well below average. However, standards are showing rapid improvement in the current Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment procedures are very good and provide students with very good support including targets for improvement.
- Teaching is good and results in good achievement by students.
- New teaching plans are very thorough and provide for a variety of activities that interest students.
- Occasionally students do not listen carefully enough; this slows their learning.

Commentary

85. Standards measured by teacher assessment for Year 9 in 2004 were below the national average and girls did better than boys. In comparison with results in students of similar prior attainment they were well below average. However, they were an improvement on the Year 9 results in 2003. GCSE results in 2004 were well below the national average; students did less well than in other subjects and many more boys than girls followed the GCSE course. Achievement in tests and examinations was unsatisfactory but now standards in lessons and GCSE module test scores are rising quickly and currently students are achieving well.
86. Standards in lessons in Year 9 are below national expectations but the most able students produce work that is well above expectation. In Year 11 standards are also below national expectation, although they vary and the work of the most able students is of a very high standard. Changes to the management of the department, new teaching programmes and very good marking and advice for students have resulted in higher standards in lessons than in recent examinations.
87. Achievement is good. Teachers regularly arrange for students to assess their own work, making a strong contribution to achievement. Lessons are demanding and planning is good. Tasks are well matched to the needs of students and the gifted and talented are provided with challenging extension tasks. Students with special educational needs do well because teachers and learning support assistants provide good support and work is well matched to their needs. Boys and girls do equally well.
88. Teaching and learning are good and a significant amount of teaching is very good. In the best lessons, very good planning involves the students in the lessons and demonstration is used well to ensure that they know what to do. Challenging and interesting activities result in very good behaviour. Skilful use of ICT provides clear instructions and explanations and teaching engages most students' interest so that they work hard. However, sometimes inattention leads to uncertainty and learning slows. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour. Students are regularly encouraged and relationships are good; consequently, cooperation is good and most work is completed thoroughly. Students are well motivated and learn to work independently during very well organised coursework. They

regularly assess their own work, and learn how to improve it because teachers provide good advice.

89. Leadership and management are very good. They have very effectively raised standards through good planning and very thorough records of marks that are used well to inform students about progress and to support underachieving students. Teaching plans are extensive; they include materials for the most able and students with special educational needs. Collaboration with primary schools is very good. ICT rooms are regularly open, providing very good support for students.
90. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards declined but are now rising quickly in Years 10 and 11. Procedures for assessing students' work are very good. New schemes of work are very thorough and ICT courses are supported by use in some other subjects, particularly in science. A new applied ICT course in Years 10 and 11 interests students and contributes to work-related learning. Accommodation for ICT and resources for teachers and students are both very good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. Provision for cross-curricular ICT in Years 10 and 11 is **unsatisfactory**.
92. The majority of students who do not take a GCSE course in ICT have no experience of using control technology during Years 10 and 11 and this part of the National Curriculum requirement is not met. Students are taught much of the National Curriculum but there is no monitoring of its teaching and the use of ICT varies between subjects. ICT is taught well in some subjects, including English, art, and geography; in science it is very good. In these subjects ICT is well planned and it provides opportunities for students to work independently. In other subjects, including modern foreign languages and religious education, much less use is made of ICT; in mathematics, use is satisfactory but needs further development and there is not enough use in health and social care. This restricts the opportunities for independent learning that ICT provides. In science data logging is provided for all students and in design and technology CAD/CAM activities and equipment levels are good, but use by students is still inconsistent. Word-processing and presentation software are used well in English and in geography. New interactive whiteboards are used skilfully by some teachers to interest students and make learning more effective but for some, training, although planned, has not taken place and they are not used as well. Overall, students' ICT competence is good.
93. Progress, especially investment in equipment, since the previous inspection has been good. There is a new ICT suite that can be used by all subjects and art, English and science make especially good use of it. Its popularity means that there is little scope for increasing its use in other subjects. The new network and computers are fast and reliable and resources are very good and are well managed by technical staff. There are sufficient PCs and other equipment in English, design and technology and science to allow teachers to use ICT frequently but in other areas use is limited.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Good leadership and management have a positive effect on overall standards.
- Very good use of ICT and fieldwork provides very effective learning.

- Assessment is underdeveloped and students are not involved in setting targets for their improvement.

Commentary

94. In recent years GCSE examination results have been below the national average, but close to the school average. In 2004 the proportion of students attaining the highest grades was below that in most other subjects. Boys perform better than girls and above the national average.
95. By Year 9 standards are broadly average. Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is good. By Year 9 students have a good grounding in geographical skills. Most use and interpret maps well. The plotting and analyses of statistical data graphically are good. Knowledge of place is satisfactory but the understanding of spatial patterns and processes is underdeveloped. Higher attainers, including gifted and talented students, do not have enough challenge in tasks set. Average attainers progress well, except for a few who lack motivation and concentration and underachieve. Low attainers and students with special educational needs, when provided with specialist support make good progress. However, there is insufficient support provided in some lessons. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls.
96. By the end of Year 11 students attain standards close to national expectations. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. This is due to consistently good teaching with high expectations and generally well-motivated students. The best independent study GCSE projects are of very high quality and standards of coursework in students' files are much better than standards evident in recent GCSE examination results. The department has recognised the need for an intensive revision programme to improve examination performance.
97. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching includes very good planning, a good command of topics taught and the engagement of students in active learning, using well-prepared resources. Relationships are mostly warm and relaxed. However, at times, students have a poor span of concentration and quickly disengage from the focus of the lesson and this hinders progress. The best teaching is lively, enthusiastic and interesting, with questioning skilfully used to develop students' independent learning. Learning in Years 7 to 9 is restricted by insufficient use of local maps, atlases and group work. Learning would be improved if in all lessons the aims were more precisely focused; there was regular visual consolidation of the main teaching points and generally more use of visual aids.
98. The subject is well led and managed. Curriculum planning is good but does not focus precisely on the knowledge, understanding and skills to be learned. Assessment is sound but there is too much variation in the thoroughness of marking in Years 7 to 9. Students are not always aware of how they can further improve work and are not involved sufficiently in targeting for improvement. There is a very good coherent and broad programme of ICT implemented. Fieldwork undertaken is stimulating and provides very effective learning. Displays in classrooms are of high quality and provide an attractive and pleasant learning environment. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership, which is committed to the improvement and development of the subject, is reflected in rising standards.
- The non-compliance with statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 is a barrier to achievement.
- A significant element of weak teaching results in unsatisfactory learning and underachievement.
- Access to and use of information technology to support teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.

- The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development.

Commentary

99. Results in GCSE 2004 were in line with the national average. Students were entered for the first time in recent years and this represents good achievement as well as establishes a base line for future years.
100. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Students understand symbolism and its use in religious ritual, and are able to explain religious differences. Written work contains some good reflective work, for instance on the existence of God or the problem of suffering. Less able students find difficulty expressing ideas, but improvement over time is evident in the understanding shown through empathetic writing and the growing ability to express their own opinions with relevant reasons. Achievement is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as the others because of extra support. Gifted and talented students also make satisfactory progress, but some are not sufficiently stretched by unchallenging teaching.
101. Standards in the current Year 11 are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory, because students do not receive the full statutory time allocation. Work seen indicates that students are capable of producing some thoughtful work, for example, on prejudice or ethical problems, and are able to see the connection between belief and behaviour. Extended writing skills, however, are weak, as are understanding and evaluation, because they do not have the opportunity to explore in depth the range of topics laid down in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. On the other hand, those students who choose to follow the full course at GCSE are working at a level in line with the national average, and achieving well because they have sufficient time, including extra support outside lessons. Numbers opting to follow this course are increasing, indicating the growing popularity of the subject inspired by the new head of department.
102. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, ranging from excellent to unsatisfactory. Very good teaching is characterised by well-prepared, interesting lessons with a variety of activities that involve the students in their own learning. Students are challenged to think for themselves and give reasons for their opinions. There is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching, where lessons are not planned to meet the varied learning needs of students, particularly the more able and the gifted and talented, and this is a barrier to achievement for these classes. There is low expectation in the amount of copied work and the colouring in of pictures, which do not stretch even the less able students. This often leads to disruptive behaviour in these lessons, which is not firmly managed. Assessment procedures are satisfactorily in place, but marking is inconsistent, sometimes very helpfully leading to improvement but just as often cursory, unhelpful and misleading, depending on the teacher.
103. Leadership is good. There is an enthusiastic vision, good planning and a commitment to improvement, with the introduction of the GCSE options and the rapidly rising profile and popularity of the subject. Management is, however, unsatisfactory, because weak teaching persists, unaffected by genuine efforts to support and improve performance. There has been some improvement in introducing religious education in Years 10 and 11, but insufficient time is given to the subject and the provision at this stage still does not comply with statutory requirements.
104. Unsatisfactory access to information technology results in missed opportunities to encourage students' involvement in the learning process in lessons, as well as a more effective presentation of learning material. The subject makes a good contribution to personal development, especially in creating time for spirituality and the sharpening of students' understanding of moral dilemmas.
105. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because of continuing non-compliance with statutory requirements.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 9 assessments and GCSE results demonstrate good student progress.
- Teaching in all years is good and this allows students to learn successfully, although successful teaching strategies are not fully shared across the department.
- Attainment data are used well to set challenging targets for students.
- The head of department provides good leadership.
- ICT is not developed sufficiently as a teaching and learning tool.

Commentary

106. Standards in history are above national expectations at the end of Year 9 and in line with the national average in examinations at the end of Year 11. This represents good achievement in the light of these students' average attainment on entry. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have shown a significant increase above national averages over the last two years. This improvement has been aided by the strategic development of literacy strategies within the department as part of Assessment for Learning. GCSE results in 2004 are in line with the national average, with 59 per cent A*-C grades. This shows improvement over previous years, with students gaining higher grades in history than in the majority of other subjects. Girls obtain better results in history than boys and the grades for girls are above the national average. The numbers taking history at GCSE have increased significantly over the last two years.
107. In Years 7 to 9 standards of work seen are in line with national expectations. Students are making good progress in lessons. An emphasis on literacy skills has helped to raise standards. Teachers are increasingly using more active learning methods such as paired work and role-play, and this is having a positive effect on achievement. There is good provision for lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, through arrangements that group students by ability. These students make good progress particularly when they are supported by teaching assistants who plan work with the class teacher. This ensures that tasks and resources match their attainment levels well. Most students are able to select and link information from evidence sources as well as use other historical skills.
108. In Years 10 and 11 standards of work seen are average, showing good achievement in relation to prior attainment. Structured lesson plans with clear teacher direction and challenge provide a very good base for learning, and students' progress is supported by worksheets and end of module assessments using examination questions. Year 11 assignments provide opportunities for research and students demonstrate good skills in interpreting the information and evaluating the sources of evidence. Students are well prepared for the examinations and teachers ensure clear understanding of topics and practice with examination questions through an extensive revision programme and extra classes. Provision for some students with special educational needs is through the alternative Entry Level Certificate, which provides a more appropriate examination in history.
109. The good quality of teaching seen in lessons ensures that students learn well. Students are motivated by the teaching, show interest in the work and are able to sustain concentration. A variety of appropriate teaching methods is used successfully to engage the students and enable them to learn effectively. Lessons are prepared well, with clear learning objectives, starter activities and plenary sessions, and, as a result, students make good progress. The use of writing frames and the prominent display of key words and evaluation guidance encourages the development of writing skills. However, ICT as a teaching and learning tool could be more fully developed in schemes of work.

110. Learning is good when the teacher ensures understanding of topics and sets structured attainable tasks. Greater learning takes place where teachers use opportunities to encourage student reflection and check students understand the topics. Marking of students' work is diagnostic and most students are aware of their target levels and grades. Student evaluation of work and peer group assessment has encouraged students to be more aware of how to improve their work. Firm and supportive classroom management creates a good working environment for learning and ensures a swift pace to most lessons. Teaching was less effective when the pace of the lesson was slow. Students lost interest in the topic or the tasks were not clearly explained to the students. Successful learning and teaching strategies are not fully shared across the department, as in some lessons the quality of teaching is very good.
111. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The department is well led by a dynamic and forward-looking head of department. An increasing understanding of learning strategies within the department has helped to improve students' progress. Performance management is well established in the department. Good display work and opportunities for fieldwork have a very positive effect on students' learning. The department uses assessment data to evaluate students' progress and identify future changes in practice. The department has addressed all of the issues in the previous report and the subject is well placed to make very good progress in the future.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Overall provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 have improved because of the effective review of the curriculum that emphasises an integrated approach to designing and making.
- Improved access to ICT as a result of the school's technology status is having a positive effect on standards.
- The proactive approach of the subject leader is identifying weaknesses and promoting initiatives that may help to address them.
- The achievement of boys is significantly lower than that of girls because of the minimal amount of folder work and weak writing and organisational skills.
- The monitoring of weak teaching and consistent application of their assessment policy are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure the good achievement of students across all material areas.

Commentary

112. In 2004 the number of students gaining A*-C was below the national average, and the number gaining A-G grades above the national average. The achievement of girls is satisfactory, their results being close to the national average for girls. Boys' achievement overall is unsatisfactory, the gap between their attainment and that of girls being twice as wide as that seen nationally. Overall, the trend in design and technology GCSE results has shown little improvement over the last four years. Improving trends in food and textiles are evident, and there is some improvement in graphics, but these have been offset by a decline in results in resistant materials.
113. Students enter the school with widely differing experiences of design and technology. During Years 7 to 9 they achieve well and by the end of Year 9 standards are in line with national expectations. The trend over the last four years has shown significant improvement. This is because the curriculum for these students has been rigorously evaluated and revised, ensuring a strong emphasis on the integration of designing and making. Much of the work seen reflects these characteristics. Standards of making overall are above expectations but

the quality of designing – strong in some areas – is unevenly developed. For example, Year 8 students making cam mechanisms have design work that shows little evidence of exploratory thinking, and jewellery designs in Year 9 show little evidence of the sustained development of ideas. Overall, the girls' work is of a higher standard, particularly in relation to presentation. Boys' work is too frequently characterised by weak writing skills and disorganised layout.

114. In the work seen of students in Years 10 and 11 standards in food and textiles are above average, reflecting the improving trends at GCSE. Folders are well organised and work is well matched to the examination requirements. Many show a competent use of ICT in such things as analysing and presenting data. Students following the food course make products of a good standard reflecting the good understanding they have of the working characteristics of ingredients and how they can be combined to create finished products to meet specific requirements. Similarly in textiles students select appropriate materials to meet design specifications, showing competence in the use of construction techniques. These higher standards, reflect the larger number of girls following these courses. In graphics standards vary too widely and underachievement was seen in the work of both boys and girls; because standards were below average overall. The reason for this was that students were unclear about the standards expected because the ongoing monitoring of their work was unsatisfactory. The majority of those who follow the resistant materials course are boys. The most able are achieving well and estimated grades indicate that standards are rising, but are still below average. There are a significant number of boys whose prior attainment indicates that they should be attaining at a higher level, but are not doing so because folder work in particular shows below average application and industry. At the time of the inspection too many students' major examination projects in resistant materials were unfinished.
115. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, plan well and set clear learning objectives at the start of lessons. The thorough ongoing assessment of the work of students in Years 10 and 11 in food and textiles is a significant factor in raising standards in these areas. The good relationships seen in the majority of lessons promote effective teaching and learning. Where students underachieve, the inconsistent application of the department's assessment expectations is a factor. For example, verbal feedback for some students doing resistant materials is not supported by clear written targets for improvement. Students in graphics themselves note the inconsistency across the department, and contrast their good experience in other subjects with their own perceived underachievement that is linked to unsatisfactory assessment.
116. The subject leader has a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses in this department, which is effectively explained in the subject review document. This is underpinned by an enthusiasm for the subject reflected in involvement in initiatives that are well targeted at known weaknesses. Effective action has been taken to raise standards in Years 7 to 9 indicating good leadership. Management overall is satisfactory, monitoring of the work of individual teachers is routinely done but is not rigorous enough and progress in raising the attainment of older students is too inconsistent.
117. The department has fully embraced the opportunities presented by the school's technology status. The enhanced resources – particularly for computer-aided design and manufacture – are contributing well to the raising of standards in Years 7 to 9 and beginning to impact positively on the provision in the GCSE courses.
118. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory overall. Lessons now are generally more structured and standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved. Rising trends are evident in Years 10 and 11 but improvement is too uneven.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are above average.
- Very good teaching enables all groups of students to achieve well.
- Students make very good use of sketch books.
- Students demonstrate very good attitudes and behaviour in art lessons.
- Students have insufficient opportunities to use ICT in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

119. In the 2004 GCSE examination the proportion of students gaining A*-C grades was above average.
120. Standards seen in Year 9 are above average and represent good achievement. Standards seen in Year 11 are above average and represent very good achievement. There are no significant differences in the standards and achievement of students according to gender or ability. Those designated as talented in art achieve very well. Throughout Years 7 to 11 students develop very good working habits. The quality and use of sketchbooks are high. Students produce copious visual research for all projects. They explore a wide range of artists and styles and evaluate art with increasing skill and confidence. Observational drawing skills develop well, as in work influenced by Hundertwasser. Painting skills are highly competent, as in work influenced by the cubists. Students develop refined making skills, particularly in ceramic work. GCSE work demonstrates rigorous processes and is highly imaginative. Students show very good attitudes and behave well in lessons.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers possess excellent subject knowledge, which enables them to plan an imaginative curriculum that inspires students to learn. Students are highly productive because teachers manage them very well. Lessons are very well planned to provide briskly-paced progressive tasks that enable students to acquire key practical art skills quickly. Students develop confident appraisal skills because teachers ensure sufficient time is provided in each lesson to discuss outcomes and share views. Expectations are high. Visual resources are well used to inspire students and provide exemplars of standards expected. Differentiated materials are sensitively provided to ensure all students are appropriately challenged. Very good assessment procedures show students how well they are doing and what they should do to improve further. Excellent use is made of student self-evaluations in each project. Teachers provide a good range of strategies to contribute to the development of students' literacy, although students' errors sometimes go uncorrected in sketchbooks.
122. The leadership and management of art are very good. There is a clear vision for the subject based on high achievement for all students. Teachers provide very good role models to students. The curriculum is well designed and imaginative. Art contributes well to students' cultural development, especially the multi-cultural dimension. Development planning is well informed by rigorous departmental self-evaluations. It recognizes the need to provide students with greater opportunities to use ICT to generate art work in Years 7 to 9. Students benefit

from work with visiting artists and involvement in competitions. No gallery visits are currently offered to enrich students' experience of art. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, particularly in the quality of teaching.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do not achieve as well as they could in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching lacks challenge.
- Many students benefit from good instrumental teaching.
- Departmental management does not address weaknesses in class teaching.

Commentary

123. In the 2004 GCSE examinations students' results were below average.
124. Standards seen in Year 9 are below average and represent unsatisfactory achievement for the majority of students. Standards seen in Year 11 are below average but represent satisfactory achievement for the small cohort. Throughout Years 7 to 11 there are no significant differences in the standards and achievement of students according to gender or ability. Those deemed talented in music do not achieve as well as they could. As they proceed through the school students develop very variable skills in performance. They possess some facility on keyboards. Group performance lacks rhythmic accuracy and co-ordination skills are insecure. Composition work demonstrates some awareness of structure and intention, especially in jazz based work. Students have limited knowledge of musical terminology, composers and styles. Appraisal skills are weak. Their attitudes in lessons are satisfactory and they behave sensibly.
125. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Teachers possess good subject knowledge and manage students effectively. Students are encouraged to learn because teachers provide a positive classroom ethos. Assessment is used well in Year 11 to show students how they might improve further. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 lacks challenge and expectations are not high enough. Questions are rarely used to check students' understanding. Explanations of work set lack focus and clarity. Some tasks are mundane and repetitive and lack differentiation, especially for more able students. Students achieve little where lessons move at a slow pace and do not provide a sufficient range of musical activities. Too much emphasis is given to written work. Teaching methods are sometimes poor, as in a Year 9 lesson on minimalist composition, where students were not assigned instruments to develop their ideas. A Year 10 lesson on the assessment of students' performances was ineffective because the lesson ended perfunctorily, with no evaluations and class discussion of outcomes. Teachers do not correct errors in students' literacy. Good quality instrumental teaching is provided by the local music service.
126. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The department lacks vision. There is a lack of focus on what constitutes an effective music lesson. Departmental self-evaluation and planning does not seek to address weaknesses in teaching methods. Instrumental tuition is well organised. Students benefit from good facilities. Music contributes well to students' cultural education. Take up rates for extra-curricular music are low for the size of the school. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables all students to achieve well.
- Students develop effective collaborative working skills.
- Students benefit from a good quality performing space.
- A good range of curriculum enrichment is provided.

Commentary

127. In the 2004 GCSE examination the proportion of students gaining A*-C grades was average. All students entered were successful.
128. The inspection centred on Years 10 and 11. No discrete drama is taught in Years 7 to 9. Standards in Year 11 are above average and represent very good achievement. There are no significant differences in standards and achievement according to gender or ability. Those designated as talented in drama achieve very well. Students develop the skills of physical theatre with increasing confidence. Students use gesture and movement well. Vocal projection and diction are more variable in quality. Students evaluate each other's performances effectively. Collaborative working skills are impressive and there is a strong sense of team spirit. Coursework shows secure understanding of the context and narrative of the texts studied. Students are highly committed to drama and work with very good attitudes and behaviour.
129. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teacher possesses very good subject knowledge. Students are inspired to do well because work is challenging and the teacher's expectations are very high. The teacher's class management skills are excellent and the range of strategies used ensures all students stay focused and productive. Activities are briskly paced and progressive. In a Year 11 lesson vigorous individual, paired, group and whole-class work was required which motivated all students in the preparation of their exam performance. The teacher's very good-humoured and enthusiastic relationship with students significantly develops their confidence in both performance and class discussion.
130. The leadership and management of the GCSE drama course are good. The teacher has vision and provides a very good role model to students. Development planning is well conceived. The teacher has raised the status of drama within the school. Good use is made of visiting theatre groups to enrich students' experience of drama. Good quality school productions are a regular feature of the school year and many students participate in drama clubs. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good: teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allow all groups of students to achieve well. Teaching and learning benefit from the excellent quality of specialist facilities.
- The temporary subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- Students do not make sufficient use of ICT to support their learning.

- The good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all students to extend their learning.
- The teaching of GCSE theory work lacks the enhancement of a permanent, subject specific teaching base.

Commentary

131. Standards in lessons and in work of Year 9 students are in line with national expectations; standards of Year 11 students are above national expectations. The standards of boys and girls are similar. Students are achieving well across all years, given their below average attainment when they join the school in Year 7. GCSE examination results are consistently at the national average, with the exception of 2004, when standards were below the national average. Year 11 students' results in physical education are in line with those in most of their other subjects. Students with special educational needs and the talented achieve well. High attaining students are successful in a range of sports at area, county and, sometimes, national levels.
132. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Lessons are challenging and work is planned to suit all groups of students. Lower-attaining students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress, because teachers modify tasks, simplify language and use demonstrations effectively. The learning of higher-attaining students is accelerated by extension tasks and grouping. Students' learning is enhanced by the excellent specialist sports facilities. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to learn independently. In a Year 9 health and fitness lesson, students planned warm-ups, measured pulse rates and analysed data. In a lesson where teaching was more prescriptive, students were given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas. The pace dropped and some students became restless. The good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all students to extend their learning. The subject contributes well to the improvement of students' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers often use ICT well in lessons, but few GCSE students use ICT to research information or to enhance presentation. The teaching of GCSE theory work lacks the stimulation of a permanent subject specific teaching base. Students' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes.
133. Leadership and management are good. The temporary subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by a dedicated team of specialists. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and students' standards. Assessment systems are good overall, but there are some inconsistencies in the use of data to determine standards at the end of Year 9. The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The quality of teaching has improved, GCSE results have risen and opportunities for independent learning are now a feature of many lessons.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

134. The school provides a **personal and social education course** (called **CSP**) and a **citizenship education programme** for all its students. One focal point for the teaching of citizenship is the CSP course, but elements are identified and taught through discrete lessons, the tutorial programme, assemblies and other subjects of the curriculum. The subject is not examined but there are plans for a short course GCSE in citizenship. Citizenship was inspected, but since it is bound up with the CSP programme, judgements on personal and social education are included.

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Senior management and the subject coordinator have led the introduction of citizenship well.
- Good teaching includes clear citizenship objectives and helps students become good citizens.
- The curriculum includes a variety of stimulating events and activities that involve a range of community partnerships.
- The assessment and recording system does not provide teachers, students and parents with a clear enough picture of standards achieved.
- The teaching of the personal and social education programme and citizenship is not always consistent in lessons and in tutorial sessions.
- The CSP programme makes a significant contribution to students' personal development.

Commentary

135. Standards of work across all years are in line with national expectations, and students' achievement in citizenship is good. Students gain knowledge of rights and responsibilities and are able to relate these to personal choices around sensitive issues such as relationships, drugs and alcohol. They explore the broader areas of family life, and national and international politics, for instance, the current problems in Lebanon and Syria. The citizenship programme also develops students' skills, values and attitudes. They show a developing ability to discuss sensitive issues, listening to each other and weighing arguments well, and a willingness to participate as active citizens. This is shown in the involvement of a significant number of students in the school and year councils, as well as in taking on the responsibilities of peer mentoring in Years 10 and 11. The committed Youth Action Group working in the local community epitomises exactly what the outcomes of this subject should be and is to be applauded. Students with special educational needs, as well as those who are gifted and talented, contribute well and achieve as well as their peers.
136. Elements of the citizenship curriculum are taught through most other National Curriculum subjects, particularly religious education, geography and history. Students do good work in Years 9 to 11 on the issues of fair trade, capital punishment and environmental dilemmas. Racism is examined in detail.
137. The citizenship curriculum is very well organised, so that the contributions of the CSP programme, tutorials, assemblies, councils and other subjects are maximised and form a coherent and effective approach. In addition, there are enrichment days and weeks for citizenship, including outside speakers, and students' understanding of the political process was enhanced by a fruitful visit to the Houses of Parliament and a meeting with their own Member of Parliament.
138. Teaching and learning are good, but this judgement masks variations. The lessons observed were in the main well prepared and enthusiastically delivered, so that students concentrated hard and learned well. Elements of citizenship in other subjects were also well highlighted. However, because of the very large team of tutors and teachers, students' learning experience is inconsistent as some teachers and tutors are less confident or give less attention to planning than others.
139. Assessment of students' attainment and achievement is in place, but not tied securely enough to the subject's level descriptors. End of year reports are bland and do not identify or celebrate each student's progress clearly enough.

140. Leadership and management are both good. The vision and ambition for the CSP, and citizenship in particular, are impressive, in the way the co-ordinators have put together a complex programme, ensuring that heads of other subjects and year heads play their part. Monitoring of teaching is satisfactory but has not yet ensured consistent quality. The subject makes a good and very relevant contribution to the personal development of the students, particularly in the area of social responsibility.
141. There is no judgement on improvement since the last inspection as citizenship was not reported on.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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