

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ST BEDE'S INTER-CHURCH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110887

Headteacher: Ms J Hunt

Lead inspector: Mr M Beale

Dates of inspection: 27 – 30 September 2004

Inspection number: 248458

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of students:	11 to 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	681

School address:	Birdwood Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire
Postcode:	CB1 3TB

Telephone number:	01223 568816
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs C Downham

Date of previous inspection:	22 February 1999
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## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

In spite of the increase in student numbers since the last inspection as the school expands to an admissions number of 150, it is still smaller than other secondary schools. It gives priority of admission to students of the Anglican and Roman Catholic faiths. The school is popular and oversubscribed and has a waiting list of over 30 for September 2004. The vast majority of students are of white-British backgrounds, with small number from other ethnic groups, some of whom have English as an additional language. However, only one student is at an early stage of learning English. Fewer students than nationally either join the school after the start of Year 7 or leave before the end of Year 11. There is a high staying-on rate into further education from Year 11. The take-up of free school meals is considerably below the national average. The majority of students come to the school by bus from quite considerable distances. Attainment on entry is above the national average, although there is some variation in the intake from year to year. The school has developed a reputation for dealing successfully with students with special educational needs. Consequently, the proportion of students identified with special educational needs is above the national average and the proportion with statements of their needs is well above the national average. The identified range of needs is wide although the major areas are for students with moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The new headteacher has been in post for one year following a brief period when an interim headteacher led the school.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19385	Martin Beale	Lead inspector	
9708	Sylvia Daintrey	Lay inspector	
1963	Sibani Raychaudhuri	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
17541	Fran Ashworth	Team inspector	Mathematics Citizenship
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	Science
4126	Clive Parsons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs
8501	Paul Hartwright	Team inspector	Design and technology
8096	Nigel File	Team inspector	Geography History
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	French German
32219	Nicholas Smith	Team inspector	Music
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This good school** serves its Anglican and Catholic communities well. It provides good value for money. It is improving steadily and is well placed to meet the challenges it faces. Students achieve well in a purposeful and harmonious atmosphere. Hence results at GCSE are above average and rising. Students develop well as individuals and show considerable care and respect for each other.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- standards are above average in most subjects by year 11 and well above average in mathematics and geography;
- a sizeable number of teachers consistently teach interesting lessons in which the students respond well to the demands placed upon them; however, there is a small but significant amount of teaching that has scope for improvement;
- leadership successfully focuses the work of staff on tackling the main issues facing the school, including raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning;
- students with special educational needs are catered for well through programmes to tackle specific difficulties; however, support staff are not always efficiently deployed and teachers do not consistently plan to meet the learning needs of these students;
- most students are highly motivated and have a strong desire to succeed; this contributes significantly to their learning and achievement;
- provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory;
- teachers do not consistently develop skills such as those of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology as part of their subject teaching.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. Test and examination results have risen more rapidly than nationally; attendance has also risen. The proportion of very good teaching has increased. The main weaknesses have been tackled with varying success. Planning for the school's future is based more securely on the evidence from monitoring of the work of staff; their performance is more effectively appraised and managed. Assessment procedures have improved, but remain inconsistent between subjects as does the quality of marking.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Achievement is good in all year groups.** Hence, overall standards are above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. Test results for Year 9 students were above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science in 2003. English results improved in 2004, while results in mathematics and science were at a similar level. GCSE results were above average in 2003 and rose further in 2004. Standards in mathematics are well above average, while they are above average in English and science throughout the school. Standards are also above average in art and design, geography and history, but are below average for the small number of students studying music in Years 10 and 11. Students with special

educational needs make good progress particularly in courses specifically designed to meet their learning difficulties. The small number of students with English as an additional language achieve similarly to others in their classes. Students who are identified as gifted and talented also achieve well when they are extended through specific programmes including early GSCE entry in French.

**The students' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.** Behaviour and attitudes are very good. Students move purposefully around the site and are very positive in their approach to their work; they are keen to do well and to succeed. Attendance is good. However, there is scope to improve the students' punctuality to morning registration.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is good as is the quality of teaching and learning.** A high proportion of lessons are taught well and engage and interest the students, who work hard and learn new skills and ideas quickly. In a small minority of less successful lessons shortcomings include unclear learning objectives, lack of clear focus or structure and ineffective evaluation of learning. The curriculum is used well to support the school's aims of meeting the needs of all students; however, aspects such as literacy, numeracy, citizenship and the use of information and communication technology are not planned and taught consistently in all subjects. Specific programmes to support the development of students with special educational needs are highly effective, but teachers do not consistently plan their lessons to tackle the students' identified learning needs. Members of staff are successful at ensuring the well-being of the students and give them good individual support and guidance. Effective links with parents and others in the community enhance learning considerably. The programme organised by parents for gifted and talented students is particularly impressive.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall.** The headteacher has established a clear direction for the school. Senior staff and governors support this drive and together are building successfully the capacity for sustained improvement. Governors ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met. Processes to review the work of the school are becoming increasingly robust and enabling the school to plan its future based on a secure understanding of the issues it faces. The focus over the last year on improving teaching and learning in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has met with much success.

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

Parents are very much in support of the school, many sending their children considerable distances to attend. They like the care that their children are given and that the school encourages them to respect the views and beliefs of others. Students are also very positive about their experiences. They are proud of their school. They feel safe and secure and report that members of staff deal quickly and effectively with any incidents of misbehaviour that might occur.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- continue the drive to raise the quality of teaching and learning, including the use of assessment, and to eliminate the small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching;
- monitor more carefully that all students are consistently taught all aspects of citizenship;
- ensure that all students receive consistently planned opportunities through subjects to develop skills in literacy, numeracy and the use of information and communication technology;
- increase the efficiency of deployment of teaching assistants and the consistency of response of subjects to the learning of students with special educational needs.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good throughout the school. Standards are rising more rapidly than nationally and are above average.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test and examination data shows that the students make at least good progress from their attainment on entry to the school.
- Boys do better relative to girls in test and examinations than is the case nationally.
- Potentially high attaining students are extended to achieve high examination standards.
- Students do particularly well in mathematics throughout the school and in geography at GCSE; however, students studying music in Years 10 and 11 are not achieving all that they should.
- Students with special educational needs generally achieve well in specific programmes and when given effective support; however, their needs are not consistently met by all teachers.

#### Commentary

1. Overall test results for Year 9 students have risen more rapidly than nationally over the period since the last inspection. The results in 2003 (the most recent year for which there is comparative data) were above average overall and in English. Results in the same year were well above average in mathematics and science. These represented good progress for the students from their earlier Year 6 test results, although this progress was less marked in English than in mathematics and science. The Year 9 group that took the tests in 2004 was weaker than in previous years as shown by assessments at their time of entry to the school. Results improved in English in 2004, and were broadly similar in mathematics and science. However, they still represented good progress for most students. One particular feature of the Year 9 test results has been the high proportion of students who have exceeded the nationally expected standard for their age. Boys outperformed girls in mathematics and science, while girls did better than boys in English but by a smaller margin than nationally.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.1 (35.4)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.9 (37.0)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.1 (34.8)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 130 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. GCSE results have fluctuated in recent years, but the upward trend has been more rapid than improvements nationally. Results in 2003 were above average overall and represented further good progress for the students from their Year 9 tests results. Overall results improved in 2004 when all students achieved at least a grade G in each of

English, mathematics and science. This also caused the proportion of students achieving at least five A\*-G grades to increase considerably. Results in each of these subjects were above average in 2003 and rose further in 2004. One feature of the most recent GCSE results in 2004 has been that more students have gained A\* and A grades than national norms based on previous years. This was particularly the case in geography where, as in art and design students achieved higher results on average than in the other subjects that they sat. Furthermore, the school is successful at enabling virtually all students to leave with a creditable set of GCSE results, including the large proportion with special educational needs. Results in most subjects were average or above average in 2003 and improved in 2004, although results in food studies were considerably below average in both of these years. Current standards in food studies reflect these most recent GCSE results. Girls had attained better results than boys up to 2003 although not always significantly so. However, this position was reversed in 2004 when a higher proportion of boys attained at least five A\*-C grades.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	58 (48)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	37.9 (33.5)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 121 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. The good achievement is due in no small part to the quality of the teaching in most subjects. The students are also well motivated and try hard in lessons. They are keen to succeed. The quality of teaching, the constructive relationships and the students' approach to learning combine to produce an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. The students are often working to their capacity and the best teachers challenge and extend the most able. Achievement in virtually all subjects is good and it is very good in mathematics and in both art and design and geography in Years 10 and 11. Standards are at least average in all subjects and are above average in English, science and history throughout the school and in art and design in Years 10 and 11. Standards are above average in geography in Years 7 to 9 and well above average in Years 10 and 11. The highest performing subject is mathematics where standards are well above average throughout the school. By contrast, students' achievement in music is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and standards are below average in Year 11.
4. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others in mainstream classes, especially when they benefit from the planned support of teaching assistants. Where they are withdrawn for specialised individual or small group work, they generally make very good progress. However, when teachers do not plan or adapt their teaching to tackle their learning difficulties, the achievement of these students suffers and is at best satisfactory. The small number of students with English as an additional language achieve as well as others in their classes because of good teaching and the support from teaching assistants. The school's analysis of results confirms that these students make good progress. The more able students are extended and challenged well so that they achieve high standards. The programme for gifted and talented students also supports

their achievement and enables these students to be extended and to broaden their experiences considerably.

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their personal qualities are good, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is good. Punctuality is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' very positive attitudes are a significant factor in their good achievement.
- Most students show a high level of care and respect for each other which results in a calm and friendly learning environment.
- Students develop very well into confident young people willing to take responsibility and aware of moral and social issues.
- Students move purposefully and promptly to lessons but are not well motivated to arrive on time for the morning tutorial periods.

### **Commentary**

5. Most students are pleased to be at the school. They are keen to learn and have high aspirations. They value its ethos as a Christian community and the opportunities it provides for them to move on successfully to post-16 education and training. They appreciate the help and support offered by teachers and respond well in the vast majority of lessons. These attitudes were particularly strong during the inspection in Year 8, but were also seen in a considerable number of lessons in Years 7 and 11. Students with special educational needs respond very well to the group programmes and individual support provided by the teaching assistants. Students' attitudes in Year 9 were not as positive as in other year groups but were at least satisfactory. These students are willing to learn but are more critical of boring lessons, such as in science last year, and of the very small minority of teachers who tolerate misbehaviour in their classes. The disrespectful attitudes seen at the last inspection are now very rare.
6. The very good relationships between students, and between students and staff, are highly valued by both the students themselves and their parents. Students look after each other so that Year 7 students, for example, are able to settle in quickly and have no fear of bullying or harassment. Students are very confident that such incidents seldom arise, but when they do they are swiftly and successfully tackled. Students from different backgrounds mix very well together because they share the same Christian faith and values. There are very few racist incidents. The level of exclusions is low and compares very favourably with local and national rates. Students behave well in the vast majority of lessons and move around the site in a very self-disciplined manner. The school is good at identifying the few areas where behaviour is not as good as it should be and putting in place measures to improve the situation. Strategies include training and support for particular staff and alternative programmes for potentially disruptive older students.
7. Students are successfully encouraged to become mature and independent so that they are well prepared for life after school. They willingly carry out duties around the school and are particularly keen to organise fund-raising events for charities which they choose themselves through the school senate. A significant number of students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme which develops a wide range of their personal and

physical skills. The head boy and girl and their team of deputies and prefects are good role models for the rest of the school; they undertake a considerable number of responsibilities, such as appointing monitors for the buses and organising a rota of students to show visitors around the school. The school chaplaincy makes a strong contribution to the development of students' personal qualities. For example, the assembly programme and other activities inform students about topics such as world hunger, racial justice and the stereotyping of refugees. Art also makes a strong contribution by giving Year 7 students, for example, the opportunity to reflect on and create their own images of heaven and hell, inspired by the work of artists such as Bosch. Moral and social education is promoted very well in subjects such as English and science where students work very effectively in pairs and groups and discuss matters like human rights, inspired by the work of Martin Luther King, and the environment. Trips to France, Belgium and Germany widen students' horizons and visitors from different ethnic groups are invited to the school. However, the headteacher rightly recognises that multi-cultural provision is still an area for further improvement. There is now a policy for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and outcomes remain good, but there is still some unevenness in provision with missed opportunities in some subjects.

**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	552	28	0
White – Irish	18	0	0
White – any other White background	39	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	8	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	23	0	0

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

8. Between the last inspection and 2003, attendance was consistently in line with the national average, with unauthorised absence being consistently better than the national average. In 2003/4, attendance rose from the figures reported above to reach 92.8 per cent. This was because the school placed a greater emphasis on monitoring and promoting attendance through the appointment of an administrative assistant. She is carrying out her role effectively to ensure that accurate records are kept, absences are followed up and key members of staff are alerted if there any concerns. There is good liaison with the Education Welfare Service. Parents support the school well by keeping term-time holidays to a minimum. Students' good attendance is a further factor contributing to their good achievement.
9. Punctuality to lessons has improved since the last inspection when it was a minor issue. It is now good, with the vast majority of lessons seen during the inspection starting on time. The arrangements for transporting nearly two-thirds of the students from a very wide catchment area work as well as can be expected, given the notorious traffic problems surrounding Cambridge. However, the registration periods at the beginning of the day do not include any planned activities so that those students who do arrive on time have little to do. The consequence is a casual start to the school day even when the buses are not held up, and some wasted time in tutorial sessions especially those that last for 40 minutes.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	7.9
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	1.1

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good overall. There is much lively and interesting teaching that enables the students to learn quickly. Assessment arrangements have improved but are not uniformly effective across the school. The curriculum meets students' needs and is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Members of staff are successful in ensuring the well-being of the students who benefit from carefully planned support and guidance. The links with parents, other schools and the community enhance achievement considerably.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. Assessment is satisfactory, but is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students' learning benefits considerably from the teaching of a significant number of skilled members of staff.
- Weaknesses in teaching stem largely from shortcomings in lesson planning and inconsistencies in the use of assessment information.
- The features of the national strategy to improve teaching and learning have been implemented successfully in subjects such as mathematics and geography, but have been embraced inconsistently elsewhere.
- Where students are withdrawn for support in overcoming physical or social communication skills, they benefit from the very good teaching of the teaching assistants.
- The potential of setting arrangements is not being fully exploited by all teachers.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 115 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	32 (28%)	47 (41%)	29 (25%)	7 (6 %)	0	0

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

10. A considerable proportion of lessons are consistently of a quality that captures the imagination of the students, who respond by working hard and learning new skills rapidly. These lessons are well-planned and carefully structured so that learning can move forward at good pace. Very often the students are made aware of the time available for a particular task and what is expected of them. The level of challenge is high and is based on a secure understanding of the next steps in the students' learning. These lessons benefit from a variety of activities that take account of the range of learning styles of the

students. Direct teaching engages them through skilled, probing and carefully targeted questioning which often requires detailed answers. There is much developing use of new technology to enhance teaching and make learning more interesting. Group work is used to good effect and the students' skills are developed well through practical and investigative tasks, the latter being a successful feature of teaching in mathematics.

11. To tackle weaknesses in lesson planning the school has introduced a new lesson planning format to sharpen the focus of teachers on the learning of all students in their classes and to enhance teaching and learning. While a considerable number of teachers identify clearly what students are to learn in a particular lesson, this is not universally the case. Learning objectives are unclear in several lessons. They are not shared with the students or returned to so that learning can be evaluated. Consequently, students are not sure of the purpose of the lesson and do not have a clear picture of what they have learnt. Lessons do not have a clear focus or structure where learning objectives lack focus, and the students' learning does not develop as rapidly as it might.
12. Many features of the national strategy are extremely effectively applied in the most successful departments. However, the impact varies across the school. Lessons usually begin with a brief starter session. These often include a sharp activity to consolidate learning and focus the students' minds. However, in many cases this session only involves little more than a review of the work from a previous lesson. Similarly, it is in only the most successful teaching that sessions are carefully planned to evaluate the learning that has taken place and establish whether the students are ready for the next stage.
13. The school has wisely identified that training is needed to improve the effectiveness with which assessment is used to support the students' learning. The good procedures in English, mathematics, art and design and physical education are not uniformly reflected across the school. Students are aware of the level that they are on in most subjects, although in geography and history this is not related to specific criteria. The use of assessment information to plan the next steps in the students' learning varies considerably between subjects. Marking is also inconsistent in the help it gives to students to improve their work. This is leading, in several cases to a lack of a sufficiently sharp recognition that even in an ability set there is a wide variety of understanding and prior attainment. Where the teachers have a clear understanding of the students' needs and take this carefully into account in their planning activities and methods are pitched at different levels and all students learn effectively. When otherwise quite skilled teachers do not take sufficient account of assessment information their teaching is pitched at the middle of the class and as a consequence learning is not uniformly as rapid as it might be.
14. Careful assessment and skilled teaching have also been used to develop a very good programme of individual learning for students with specific learning difficulties. Teaching assistants who support students in lessons work very well, especially where they are well prepared and liaise effectively with the class teacher. However, the good practice in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, art and design and physical education is not evident across all departments. Teaching assistants are not used to full effect in a significant minority of lessons and are not deployed to best effect across the school. Subject specialists and teaching assistants know the students with English as an additional language well and support them effectively in most lessons so that they are able to cope with the demands of the curriculum. The strong emphasis on speaking and

listening and learning through a variety of activities in groups and in pairs helps these students to learn English quickly.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory, enabling good achievement in most subjects and supporting well the students' personal development. There are good opportunities for enrichment outside of lessons. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, as is staffing. Resources are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are good examples of students being required to use and develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology competence in most subjects, but their experience is too dependent upon who teaches them.
- Provision for personal, social and health education and for careers is good, although citizenship is unsatisfactory and the time that form tutors have with students is underutilised.
- Access to and participation in sport is very good, but is limited in the arts.
- The library is a very good learning resource that is well used by most subjects and is very well managed.



## Commentary

15. The school has tackled successfully the issues highlighted in the previous inspection report and statutory requirements are now met. Students are able to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of their subjects progressively as they move through the school. Most subjects contribute to the development of more general skills, including literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Sometimes, as with information and communication technology in English, this is sufficiently well-planned, organised and taught to guarantee equal access to all students, irrespective of which teacher of the subject takes them. However, too often this is not the case and students' experiences vary considerably depending on who their subject teachers are. Consequently their progress and development is inconsistent.
16. The personal, social and health education programme makes a good contribution to the students' personal development. Students appreciate the very good input from outside speakers, especially when covering sensitive health issues. They see this as enabling them to explore the practical and emotional aspects of the issues involved. Topics have been added to the programme following consultation with students. Visits such as to art galleries, visitors to school including theatre groups and other enrichment activities also make a good contribution to students' development. Sport is especially strong, with a good range of activities and good participation from students. There is insufficient contribution from art. Citizenship also fits into the PSHE programme, but several subjects are making little contribution and some teachers may include citizenship in their planning whereas others will not. Consequently provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory. The time available to form tutors, fifteen minutes registration per day and a twenty minute tutor period per week, are under-utilised, often with no structured activity. This is a missed opportunity to enhance students' personal development.
17. Students for whom English is an additional language have good access to the curriculum and are well integrated into the life of the school. The school makes good use of external support services to assess the needs of early stage English language learners.
18. The school provides satisfactorily for students on the special educational needs database and provision is good for those who have a statement of their need. Students who experience physical barriers to their learning are able to tackle them effectively through a very good programme of fine and gross motor skills development. The support provided for students with autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia and other learning difficulties is good and enables them to understand and confront their difficulties effectively. Students whose behaviour impedes their progress, such as those who experience personal and social communication difficulties and lack self esteem, are withdrawn to the 'Inner Ring Club', where they are taught communication skills; this is a very good provision, valued by students, parents and staff alike. However, the overall provision for special educational needs is weakened by the inconsistent support received through subject departments, although there are examples of good and very good practice.
19. The curriculum is monitored and kept under review to ensure that the needs of students are met and initiatives are implemented. This is especially true for Years 10 and 11, where the opportunities made available to students has broadened significantly. Relevance and enjoyment are improved for students as a result. Changes are made in a

way that is manageable and sustainable and therefore most likely to be successful. Careers education helps students to make decisions and prepares them well for their next stage of education, training or employment. The structure of the school, based around twenty minute modules is an innovative way of enabling different subjects to have lesson lengths most suited to their needs. Whilst there are some minor anomalies, this structure is broadly working well.

20. The accommodation has been improved, with a new dance/drama studio, refurbished science laboratories and a new computer suite. There are extensive, good quality playing fields, but limited indoor facilities for physical education. The art and design facilities are small and cramped and there is a lack of sound-proofing in the new music facilities. The library has improved substantially and is now well used and very well managed. The school has also recently invested in renewing and updating resources so that these now support learning well.

### **Care, guidance and support**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is very successful in integrating students in Year 7 who join from a high number of primary schools.
- The school's attention to the care and support of students enables all groups to make good progress.
- Students are treated as partners in planning for their own and the school's improvement.

### **Commentary**

21. Parents are rightly very happy with the arrangements for settling their children into school. Students appreciate their 'taster day' in July when they attend a few lessons and try out the school bus journey. Students with special educational needs are given an extra induction day before they start. The strong ethos of care, maintained since the last inspection, ensures that new students are helped by other students and adults, such as form tutors, when they arrive. After only three weeks at school, Year 7 students feel secure and confident in their new surroundings and are able to take full advantage of the new opportunities available to them.
22. A wide range of teaching and non-teaching staff and outside agencies are involved in making sure that the school is a safe environment for learning where the needs of individual students are known and met. The very experienced assistant headteacher leads the pastoral team effectively, setting a very good example in his day-to-day work by being visible and accessible to students throughout the school day. Younger students with physical and social difficulties are supported very well in special programmes which help them develop their confidence and self-esteem and the skills they need to achieve well in mainstream classes. Older students at risk of disaffection are offered alternative programmes which guide them to different routes towards successful achievement. For example, during the inspection a group of Year 10 students were benefiting from a 'Thinking Skills' programme developed by a number of local schools and agencies.

Students identified as gifted or talented are given good extension activities through the special projects run by a parent support group. Staff know the small number of students with English as an additional language well and support them effectively in most lessons so that they are able to cope with the demands of the curriculum.

23. Students are pleased with the guidance they receive from staff and the Connexions adviser as they move through the school. This enables them to be clear about their options at each stage of transition. They are increasingly aware of their levels and targets and what they need to do to improve, although the quality of advice they receive can vary between subjects. Individual education plans for students with special educational needs are not sharply focused on individual needs, leaving students with no clear, achievable target to work towards before the plan is reviewed.
24. Arrangements for child protection and for first aid are good. A senior member of staff and a teaching assistant have had full training in child protection and all teaching and non-teaching staff are made aware of the procedures to be followed. There are a suitable number of qualified first aiders and very good records are kept, both on the computer and on paper, of incidents, accidents and treatment. Health and safety procedures are managed effectively and risk assessments are in place for most areas. In a similar picture to the last inspection, the school is working its way through issues raised in reports made by an external adviser and a governor with expertise in safety.
25. Students generally feel that they have a voice in the school. Their views are surveyed at least annually and the school takes effective action on their concerns, such as the low-level disruption in some classes last year. Students are involved in setting and reviewing their personal targets through the tutor interview system and contribute written comments in their annual reports. The well-established student senate, run by the head boy and girl, has an influence on matters such as school uniform, the length of the lunch hour and the quality of food in the canteen. Senior staff and students are aware that not all students feel as fully represented as they could be and are taking steps to improve the ways in which the work of the student senate is communicated.

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

Links with parents are good. Partnerships with other schools, colleges and the community are also good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parental support for their children's education has a very positive effect on students' achievement.
- The school is developing a good range of links with agencies and other organisations which benefit the provision for students.

## **Commentary**

26. The school has maintained its strong partnership with parents since the last inspection. Parents continue to be very satisfied with the school and are keen to send their children long distances to attend it. They support it very well over issues such as regular attendance, completion of homework or coursework, and the Christian values shared between home and school. The support group for parents of students with special

educational needs, noted as an unusual feature in the last inspection report, is now complemented by a support group for parents of students identified as gifted and talented. This is an excellent pioneering initiative which has had a very significant impact on provision in the school and its links with the local community. Parents have funded several extra-curricular projects for these students to undertake, a recent one being an archaeological exploration of a local historical site. The group also invites speakers to raise awareness of national developments in providing for gifted and talented students. Its work has resulted in the appointment of a teacher as co-ordinator for gifted and talented students and in the integration of some of the local heritage work into the school curriculum so that all can benefit.

27. The school provides parents with good information about their children's progress. Parents feel very comfortable in approaching staff if they want to know more or have any concerns. There is regular consultation with parents and the school takes effective action on points raised. Annual and transitional reviews of statemented students are well supported by parents and external agencies.
28. The school makes good use of its community links to enhance the students' experiences. For example, visitors from local churches and Christian youth groups come regularly to take assemblies. Visitors also make an important contribution to the programme for students' personal, social and health education. There are good links with companies which have a positive impact on provision for work-related learning including, for example, the applied GCSE business studies course. The school continues to develop international links, more recently with a Christian school in Finland, and has won a British Council award to develop this work further. At the same time it is used well by the local community as a centre for a wide range of dance and exercise classes.
29. Links with other schools have improved since the last inspection. Staff are more aware of what is taught in primary schools and are able to build on students' experiences more effectively in Year 7. The headteacher has established effective links with state and independent schools and colleges in the city so that the school can be fully involved in current developments in education, such as assessment for learning and the 14 to 19 agenda. Several subjects have developed their own constructive links with other schools. For example, in physical education, students have good opportunities to take part in sports competitions. In mathematics, Year 9 students have had the chance to create mathematical games for children in a local infant school. Strong links have been maintained with the two main sixth form colleges in the city so that the majority of students who go there are able to make a smooth transition.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good overall. Governance is good. The headteacher and other key staff provide good leadership; management systems and processes are effective.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The new headteacher brings with her a determination to succeed and considerable relevant experience to the post.
- Improved systems for reviewing the work of staff provide a secure platform from which to plan for the school's development.
- Governors have a strong commitment to the continued improvement of the school.

- Meeting the needs of all students is high on the school's agenda, although support staff are not always effectively and efficiently deployed.

## Commentary

30. The headteacher's drive to continue the school's improvement while building on its strengths is supported well by experienced and effective senior managers. She has identified many of the main issues facing the school and introduced steps to secure its improvement in a comparatively short space of time. Her firm leadership is respected by staff and governors who are proud of the school and share the commitment to raise standards and the students' achievements. Teachers have welcomed the changes introduced and recognise that there is scope for their practice to develop and adapt further.
31. There is a clear strategic direction for the work of the school, based on a thorough evaluation of available test and examination data and increasingly rigorous and effective monitoring of the work of staff. Broadening the methods used by teachers and ensuring that lessons are planned carefully to meet the needs of all students have been identified as key factors in the drive to improve teaching and raise achievement further. Concerted action is being taken, although in many cases this has not been in place for sufficient time to have a lasting benefit. There is strong commitment to improve the work of members of staff as is reflected in the process for their induction into the school, the arrangements for their professional development and the formal management of their performance.
32. Key issues at the last inspection included the need to improve monitoring, evaluation and development planning. Since her appointment, the current headteacher has given rigorous attention to these areas. She has introduced a thorough and systematic process for reviewing the effectiveness of the work of departments and then using the evidence obtained to plan future action. Heads of department are developing their skills in evaluating their departments and monitoring the work of teaching staff with varying success. However, in a significant minority of cases they are not sufficiently sharp and accurate in their evaluations. The headteacher is seeking to rectify this through training and coaching. In spite of this, there is considerable coherence between the analysis of data, evidence obtained from monitoring processes and the school's self-evaluation. This gives a firm basis on which to plan for future development and improvement.
33. The school has established a deserved reputation for its work with students who have special educational needs. There is a strong and shared commitment to meeting the needs of all students and ensuring that all can benefit from the opportunities provided by the school. In seeking to achieve this goal, a large number of support staff have been employed. While they generally perform an effective role they are not always efficiently deployed to classes and are not fully utilised in all lessons. This restricts the impact of their work.
34. Governors have become more searching in their questioning of the school and the headteacher, and challenge well through the demanding objectives that they set. They operate effectively through the committee structure and use the funding available to meet their major priority of maintaining staffing levels. Key governors have a clear picture of the school's strengths and the on-going action needed to tackle identified shortcomings. Governors identify seeking specialist school status and extending the school's accommodation as major priorities in the near future. However, they are also strongly in

support of the headteacher's drive to improve teaching and learning. Governors use best value principles when considering spending decisions and strive to secure value for money. However, the school has declared a small deficit budget for the current year, along with many secondary schools in the county. The school's spending per student is below average. This, combined with its effectiveness and the background characteristics of the students is resulting in the school providing good value for money.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,162,088	Balance from previous year	55,100
Total expenditure	2,153,362	Balance carried forward to the next	63,826
Expenditure per student	3,263		

## **WORK RELATED LEARNING**

Provision for work related learning (WRL) is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Careers guidance and work experience are well organised and have a significant bearing on students' achievements.
- Careful monitoring of students' skills indicates that the planned programme is delivered coherently and that entitlement is achieved, although subjects are not always aware of the contributions that they are making.
- Links with business organisations either through visits or through visitors to school are broadening the students' understanding of the world of work.
- Specific enrichment activities throughout the school are effective in developing relevant skills and knowledge.

### **Commentary**

35. The school has taken action successfully to ensure that provision for WRL is having a positive effect on students' achievements. Learning through work is firmly embedded in the curriculum in part through a thorough and comprehensive programme of careers education. Work experience is also well organised with placements carefully matched to the students' needs, capabilities and interests. Preparation for work experience is thorough. The debriefing for the current Year 11 that had taken place in the week prior to the inspection had proved to be a valuable part of the whole experience. A small group of students benefit from vocationally orientated courses at the local college and placements for extended work experience have been arranged for students who would not benefit from the full Year 11 curriculum.
36. Business links are exploited well to support learning on the applied GCSE courses so that students on these courses can understand the application of their study to the world of work. Regular visitors to the school also provide students with a greater understanding of work. These visitors are supplemented by visits by the students themselves to various business in the area.

37. A detailed evaluation and assessment of the students' skills has been undertaken for the last two years. This indicates that all aspects are covered and that students are developing well all of the required skills. This evaluation also shows that requirements have been met with increasing effectiveness over these two years. However, it is evident that subjects are not fully aware of the contributions that they are making towards developing skills such as in team work and in encouraging students to become independent and take responsibility for their learning. For example, teaching in Year 10 physical education lessons encourages team building and group work skills very effectively. A further example is the applied business studies course projects where students are able to compare and contrast businesses in the local area and learn more through this about work.
38. The management of provision is well-organised and is giving a clear direction to the development of WRL. This includes the use of strategies such as collapsing the school timetable for a half-day or full day so that specific activities can be more effectively organised. The curriculum for the current Year 10 has been adapted well to introduce WRL elements for a group of students for whom the full diet of GCSE subjects has been deemed unsuitable. During the course of the inspection, many of these students were participating in a most worthwhile week of thinking skills activities.

## 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

- Teaching is good and, as a result, all groups of students achieve well.
- Standards at the end of both Years 9 and 11 are above average with significant strengths in speaking and listening, and reading.
- The school encourages reading and enjoyment of books in a variety of ways; this enjoyment results in very good reading standards with high levels of understanding.
- Teachers and assistants effectively support students with special educational needs so that these students achieve as well as others.
- Strong and committed leadership helps to develop the department and its work.
- Literacy skills are not consistently developed through all subjects of the curriculum.
- With the exception of higher-attaining students, many do not spell as well as they should.

##### Commentary

39. There are several reasons why achievement is good and standards are above average with particular strengths in speaking and listening and reading. There is good subject knowledge and experience in the department and students respond with enthusiasm and willingness to learn in all year groups. The senior managers and the head of department have been tracking progress with great care and monitoring teaching. The school has taken steps to improve all aspects of English through the introduction of a wide range of teaching methods and activities that help students to learn effectively. Results in 2003 were above average in the national tests at the end of Year 9, and the GCSE results in both English language and literature were also above the national average. Provision has shown good improvement since the last inspection, and test and examination results have improved in 2004, although they remain above average when compared with the 2003 national figures.
40. A particular strength is the way that the teachers use discussion and talk to encourage students' learning; lessons offer many opportunities for speaking and listening. Teachers use drama and group work imaginatively with students to refine and extend existing ideas and explore new ones. The middle attaining students in a Year 11 class were seen eloquently discussing how power was portrayed in Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*. They were encouraged to produce a brief play within the play presenting what was going through the consciousness of the chosen character, John Proctor. They achieved high levels in their understanding of the play as well as in speaking and listening. Students of all ages speak confidently, using accurate vocabulary. They support each other and co-operate with each other well when working in groups or pairs. This strong focus on speaking and listening enables the school's small number of students with English as an



additional language to acquire English quickly and achieve as well as others in their classes.

41. Standards in reading are well above average throughout the school. Members of staff have developed a culture for reading, aided by schemes such as the paired reading, Reading Challenge and good use of the library. Most lessons include an element of reading, where teachers join in, thus becoming effective role models. Students read aloud very well with expression and intonation as seen in a play reading in a Year 8 class. By Year 9, most students are readily able to draw on implied meanings and conclusions from their reading of a variety of texts. Students following the GCSE courses in English and English literature read a wide range of demanding texts and achieve very well in their understanding and interpretations. The students in a Year 11 class very clearly interpreted the social segregation of 1960's America as depicted through imagery, irony and suggestive language in a poem, *Two Scavengers* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti.
42. Aspects of writing were identified as weaknesses in the previous inspection report. Teachers have been given the opportunity to work with the local education authority consultant to improve their practice because standards in writing are not as strong as they are in reading. Current standards are above average and improving; most students can write expressively, using correct grammar, punctuation, appropriate vocabulary and a range of writing styles. Currently, Year 7 students are writing a leaflet on animal rights, using the language of arguments. This work is linked to the department's contribution to citizenship. However, there is scope for improvement in spelling particularly for many middle and lower-attaining students.
43. Effective teaching with high level of support from teaching assistants for literacy contributes effectively to the learning of students with special educational needs, and they achieve well. All students make at least satisfactory use of their information and communication technology skills in English. Teachers encourage them to use the Internet and CD ROM to research on authors and their work, and use their skills to improve the presentation of their work.
44. Subject leadership and management are good in ensuring that members of staff work as a team to meet the priorities in the subject. Assessment is regularly undertaken and marking is generally good, telling students how to improve their work, but there are a few inconsistencies in some classes.

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

45. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. As teaching and learning in this area are not formally monitored, the promotion of literacy through other subjects is not consistent. Although the students' skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing are not developed systematically in all subjects their literacy skills are good. There is evidence of teachers using lessons like art and design, mathematics, history and geography to develop these skills. Students use their skills well to support learning in most subjects. A very good example was seen in art and design, where the Year 7 students evaluated and explained images of conflict, suffering and horror in the picture *Heaven and Hell*.

### **French and German**

Provision in French and German is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are average, but speaking is not promoted enough.
- Students approach examination classes positively and they make satisfactory progress.
- Attainment is held back by inconsistent practice in teaching within the department.

### **Commentary**

46. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is average but students' ability in speaking is below average. The assessments made by teachers, which show standards to be well above average, are over optimistic. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average in French and slightly below in German. This reflects well on girls' attainment as the levels reached by boys were only slightly above average in French and below in German. Boys' results improved in both languages in 2004, while girls' fell, and overall the results were close to those expected nationally, reflecting the average standards observed in lessons. These, in turn, reflect the quality of teaching and learning, which is satisfactory overall, with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The number of boys taking the examination is diminishing sharply, with only four taking German in the current Year 11.
47. Achievement is better amongst older students, who are more focused on examination success than the younger ones. Overall, achievement is satisfactory in both languages in all age groups, but those younger students who find languages difficult achieve less well than all others. Students behave well and join in with all lesson activities. Development of literacy skills is good and the use of information and communication technology is consistently satisfactory, but in other respects teaching quality is inconsistent. Marking is often good, but not all work is marked. Where teachers conduct lessons in the foreign language, students speak well, but too much English was used in half the lessons observed and students in these classes lacked confidence in their speaking skills. Teachers do not always give students a clear learning objective, or relate it to the speaking skill, or return to it at the end of the lesson. Provision for less able students in Years 7 to 9 is variable. Effective individual support is provided for students with special educational needs, but large numbers of middle ability students are not motivated to continue learning languages.
48. The management of the department is satisfactory, though there are weaknesses, such as the overestimation of results at the end of Year 9. The department organises study visits, trips and links with foreign countries. Teaching is monitored, examination results are analysed and weaknesses accurately identified. These include boys' attainment in 2003 and development of the speaking skill, but the department has not dealt with either weakness adequately. Some teachers are tackling the deficiencies, but the department suffers from a lack of overall direction and leadership is unsatisfactory. The department has no clear vision, underlining the importance of languages for all students and setting out a model for good practice in lessons. Some of the strengths listed in the last report have declined and weaknesses remain. Student behaviour is now better, but improvement overall is unsatisfactory.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is good or very good in the majority of lessons.
- Students make very good progress in many lessons because of the emphasis on thinking and mathematical reasoning.
- The department's contribution to the development of information and communication technology skills and citizenship lacks consistency.

## **Commentary**

49. In the national tests for Year 9 students and in GCSE examinations, students achieved results in 2003 which were well above national averages. Results are improving at a rate which exceeds the improvement nationally and compare very favourably with similar schools. In 2004 more Year 9 students than predicted reached their target of Level 5, and the number of students gaining A\*-C grades at GSCE jumped by 12 percent. Even though every student took the examination, all achieved at least a grade F and the vast majority of students achieved at least a grade E.
50. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and students of all abilities achieve well. Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 where students' achievement is very good. Standards are well above average throughout the school. The students are clearly required to think, deduce, speculate, reason and test, ensuring very good progress in all areas of mathematics. Students with special educational needs make good progress because their teachers know them well, make sure they have any support which is needed and insist on good standards of behaviour and homework. Teachers often use a visual approach which enables students for whom English is an additional language to understand and progress well. There is good extra-curricular provision for the most able.
51. Teachers are clear what they want students to learn, plan lessons with variety to keep students interested, and keep them involved by inviting them to explain and demonstrate. Although teachers have high expectations they make sure that queries are answered and that the pace is not too fast for students having difficulty. Teachers use praise generously to reward good thinking and students are willing to put forward ideas without the fear of being wrong. Progress has been made in the use of new technology, although there is still room for improvement. While computers are used frequently and well in one classroom to introduce and develop ideas, this is not universal. This means that some students have better access to computers in mathematics than others. Less experienced teachers sometimes rely too much on students working through examples from the book or misjudge the difficulty of the work for lower ability groups. Students' learning is very good because their teachers are interested in them as individuals and know them well. They work hard and are pleased with the praise they earn. They listen well both to the teacher and to each other. When working in groups, students happily pool ideas and test them, making more progress by co-operating, than they could by working alone.
52. The head of department has a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses and is able to prioritise developments. She provides a good role model for teaching and delegates to create an effective team. The very good scheme of work written for Years 7 and 8 is one of the reasons they were awarded Leading Department status. As a result of this good leadership there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Results have risen each year, and show that most students are making very good progress based on their own previous performance. The emphasis on thinking through problems and

applying mathematics ideas to new situations is now a strength, whereas at the last inspection it was an area of concern.

53. Management is satisfactory. The analysis of results is thorough, students are set targets and their progress towards them is followed. Classroom observation records tend to praise the good aspects without pointing out areas for improvement. Students' work is usually marked regularly and some teachers use a brainstorm at the start of lessons to assess how much students have understood and remembered. The range of good assessment ideas in the handbook are only just beginning to be tried out by some of the teachers. Opportunities to develop citizenship are missed in lessons.

#### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

54. Although mathematical standards are high, usage of numeracy across the curriculum is not as strong because it is neither well enough co-ordinated nor promoted. Students are able to use their skills in other subjects when required to do so, but opportunities are missed to apply and consolidate mathematical ideas.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

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

- Good teaching is contributing to the rising standards.
- The good attitudes and behaviour of the students contribute to good learning.
- Teachers do not make enough use of different tasks to match the different ability levels of students in the same class.
- The marking of books is inconsistent.

## Commentary

55. Test and examination results and standards of work seen are an improvement on those at the time of the last inspection, with standards rising at a faster rate than those nationally. Results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average. In the same year, virtually all students obtained a GCSE grade in the A\*-G range and results were above average. Results at Year 9 and GCSE improved in 2004.
56. Achievement is good throughout the school. The students make good progress and in all years achieve better than might be expected by their prior attainment. Work seen in the inspection shows the students' standards to be above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. There is no consistent pattern to any variation in attainment by gender. In some years, girls have performed better than boys and in other years the picture is reversed.
57. Students with special educational needs achieve at a similar rate to other students. Members of staff know the students well and support is given in lessons. Students work well individually and when working in pairs and groups; they are confident in practical skills. The recently refurbished laboratories are a valuable resource to support these. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now good in all years. In most lessons, work has an appropriate challenge. Students are constantly encouraged and they respond with good behaviour and attitudes. This promotes a secure environment for learning and makes a positive contribution to the good progress and learning in lessons. Language skills are developed well and the use of scientific terminology is effectively promoted; however, more general grammatical errors are not always identified and corrected in the students' books. In less successful lessons, the weaker aspects of lessons include missed opportunities to develop the scientific investigative skills of students and a lack of tasks designed specifically to the ability level of different students, even when these had been included in the planning. Marking is erratic; in some cases work is left unmarked, comments are not followed up and the use of constructive comments is rare. This means that students do not have a clear lesson-by-lesson guide as to how they can improve their work. Homework is used effectively to support the work done in lessons. Numerical skills are used appropriately and increasing use is being made of new technology to support teaching and learning.
58. Leadership and management of the department are good. Following a time of difficulty the department now has a full quota of staff. There is a clear vision for the development and improvement of the subject. A new head of department has been appointed and has already put strategies in place to move the subject forward although it is too soon to see the impact. The school has managed the department well and with strong determination to tackle weaknesses. As a result, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- 2004 GCSE results were much better than those achieved in 2003.

- Whilst there has been much improvement in provision of late, significant challenges still remain.
- Teaching is good overall but there is a small amount that is unsatisfactory.
- There is some good use of ICT to support learning in other subjects, but it remains too variable to develop the students' skills consistently.

## Commentary

59. Results in 2003 for students following the GNVQ course were below average and below the performance of other subjects in the school. Student assessments at the end of Year 9 showed that this year group had also performed significantly worse than students nationally. These results prompted a targeted action plan to improve provision and to raise standards. This year's results at the end of Year 11 and teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 both rose significantly as a result and were both above the national averages of 2003. Students are making secure progress in lessons and working at levels in line with those expected nationally; their achievement is satisfactory.
60. Information and communication technology has been removed from a rota with design and technology and art and design for students in Years 7 and 8, and there are early signs that this is producing greater continuity. This has not yet been managed for Year 9 where students only study Information and communication technology for half the year, placing a significant gap in the progressive development of their understanding and skills. There is systematic coverage of the requirements of the national curriculum for Years 7 to 9. An applied GCSE has been adopted to replace the GNVQ that resulted in the poor results in 2003, but the current Year 10 are studying this double subject syllabus in the time recommended for just one. The school has recognised the need to monitor carefully the progress that students make to ensure that it is sufficient to meet their target grades. A new computer suite has been brought on line very recently, continuing the process of updating and expanding resources. Nevertheless the rooms available are insufficiently ventilated, producing uncomfortable working conditions for staff and students. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.
61. There has also been some change in teaching personnel, and further change will take place shortly. Despite this, the quality of teaching and learning remains satisfactory overall. All lessons are characterised by good working relationships between students and teachers. Most teachers have a good understanding of the subject and use this to good effect in demonstrating key ideas and processes, in solving problems and in challenging students. In good lessons, these features combine with students applying themselves well, working independently and taking responsibility for their own learning. Thus they make good progress. A lack of subject expertise in the small proportion of lessons where teaching and learning is unsatisfactory results in students wasting time because they have been poorly prepared and insufficiently focused. Learning support assistants usually provide good support for both their target students and others more generally, although they are occasionally under-utilised when more than one assistant is present.
62. The co-ordinator carries out much analysis of data and monitors and evaluates the subject, including some observation of lessons. Contact and links with local schools have enabled a better understanding of how well the standards achieved by students compare with standards in other schools, and external support has helped the team to focus on

developments directly impacting on those standards. Leadership and management are satisfactory and there is secure potential to sustain the improvements of late.

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

63. The students' competence in the use of information and communication technology is satisfactory. There are good examples of students using and applying their information and communication technology skills in most subjects, such as the analysis of census data in geography. Some subjects, such as English, have enshrined this into their plans and ensure that all teachers of the subject carry through the plan. This guarantees that all students have equal access to these experiences. Most other subjects have yet to achieve this level of guarantee. Not all students in Years 10 and 11 follow an information and communication technology programme so this inconsistency is an important issue for those who do not. Furthermore, planned opportunities to develop further the skills that they already have are missing. Additional suites coming on line will enable greater access for subjects to facilities.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is good.

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

- GCSE students attain well above average standards and do better at geography than in their other subjects.
- Students are enthused and motivated by knowledgeable and stimulating teaching.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 have achieved less because teaching has lacked coherence and opportunities for independent enquiry.

#### **Commentary**

64. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11 and standards are well above national averages for GCSE students. Results in GCSE in 2003 were significantly above the national average and the proportion of students obtaining A\* and A grades was above average. Results for 2004 were equally good. Higher-attaining GCSE students are capable of high order research, incorporating geographical concepts such as polycentric patterns, linear relationships and changing demand patterns. Middle-attaining students carry out local investigations to produce and analyse comparative graphs which consider more concrete geographical issues. Less able students complete independent investigations on access to services in contrasting areas. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and standards are above average by Year 9. Higher-attaining Year 9 students were meeting national expectations by giving comprehensive descriptions of tidal features, explaining the process of longshore drift, and considering the advantages and disadvantages of tidal power. Middle-attaining students showed similar understanding of tidal features but did not examine tidal power in detail. Lower-attaining students could distinguish between erosion and deposition. Previous work in Year 8 on Brazil was fragmented and lacked extended and independent enquiry. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.
65. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school, although more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers use visual resources and new technology to make lessons memorable. Teaching is energetic and imaginative as in enabling Year 8 students to appreciate the impact of an earthquake during the first minute of activity and to understand tectonic plate movements through graphic illustration. Students in Year 7 were engrossed in a grid reference skills activity using their own copies of the local ordnance survey map. GCSE students undertook an interesting and challenging enquiry into standards of living and quality of life accessing census data using the Internet. They used a spreadsheet to collect and present information and worked successfully in small groups because the lesson was well planned and the tasks interesting. One pair was self-motivated to look at statistics about ethnic minorities in Cambridge. Teaching was less successful in a lower-attaining GCSE group when some students struggled with the demands of a complex text. Teaching by non-specialists was satisfactory, but lacked supporting visual resources.



66. Leadership and management are good and have been instrumental in securing good improvement since the last inspection. Standards in GCSE and the use of new technology have improved since the last inspection. Geography in Years 7 to 9 lacks the depth and coherence which the GCSE course successfully develops. However, the new subject leader is successfully starting to improve teaching in Years 7 to 9 by developing more specific learning objectives, suggested teaching strategies and by a broader approach to assessment. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not allow students to display their achievements in different ways, to work in a range of situations or to work independently in developing geographical enquiry skills. Marking is beginning to be more helpful to students in identifying why their work is effective. Out-of-school learning is effective for GCSE, with contrasting visits to observe and gather data, but is insufficient in Years 7 to 9 with only one major visit last year. The geography curriculum covers many issues of global citizenship such as the position of factory workers and coffee producers in less economically developed countries, and touches on aspects of the work related curriculum, but does not go on to develop the citizenship skills of participation and responsible action.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE in 2003 were well above the national average and above average in 2004.
- Teaching is good and students learn well.
- Assessment is thorough and very successful for GCSE students although younger students receive insufficient guidance on how to progress.

## Commentary

67. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and standards are above average. Higher-attaining Year 9 students were meeting national expectations by evaluating sources critically and reaching reasoned conclusions about the ending of the slave trade, the outbreak of World War I and life in the Blitz. Middle-attainers could understand limitations in remembered accounts. Lower-attainers work within national expectations describing working conditions in the industrial revolution or the death of King Harold. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well and attain above average standards. GCSE students produced very detailed work making good inferences from archaeological evidence, recognising its limitations, and showed excellent analysis and understanding of how the National Trust was engaging in historical representation. Middle-attaining students made limited inferences from evidence, working in much less detail, and with some unfinished tasks. Lower-attaining students did not understand representation and had limited views of sources of evidence.
68. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the planning of lessons seen was effective so that teaching engaged the interest of students who were keen to answer questions and work hard. Teaching utilises good visual and oral resources, practical opportunities for archaeological research and visits to sites and museums in Britain and France. GCSE teaching in Year 11 elicited very

mature, thoughtful responses as students grappled with difficult sources about British foreign policy in Palestine. Students were challenged to explore their own questions. Well produced GCSE coursework demonstrates high levels of motivation and commitment. Students in Year 7 were excited by tasks on the Norman invasion, working well in groups to evaluate sources and report their findings. There is insufficient focus in Years 7 to 9 on teaching students to be able to explain how the past can be represented and interpreted in different ways. New technology is used well to teach aspects of history but is underdeveloped.

69. Leadership and management are good and have enabled good improvement since the last inspection. Leadership is reflective and focused on enabling GCSE students to achieve well, so that coursework and revision are very well organised. The humanities strand of the school development plan identifies appropriate targets, but the timescales are too broad and the tasks to achieve the targets are not sufficiently explicit. The Manager's notebook enables teaching and performance to be carefully monitored but there is insufficient analysis of what and how well students are learning. Assessment successfully enables students to achieve well in GCSE and the initial skills assessment in Year 7 was effective in focusing these new students on next steps. Marking often informs students of the quality of their work, but does not indicate what they need to do to improve. Opportunities to consider how the past influences the present are well developed in GCSE but opportunities to achieve this by explicitly delivering aspects of the citizenship programme of study and the work related curriculum have not been developed.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Where there is good teaching the students respond with interest.
- In Years 7 to 9, insufficient attention is given to developing students' skills in design, research and evaluation.
- Students have a good understanding of how they can improve, although the limited short-term goals mean that the students do not develop sufficiently the capacity to work independently.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in food studies in Years 10 and 11.
- Students' design work is not monitored and graded at sufficiently frequent intervals.

#### **Commentary**

70. The overall quality of provision in design and technology is similar to that reported in the last inspection. As reported at the time of the previous inspection, textiles and graphics more consistently produce the best results and these were well above average in the latter in 2003. Although students do not perform as well in food and resistant materials, when combined together GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average. However, girls' results were much better than those for boys who gained well below national average results in resistant materials in 2003. More recent results for 2004 are likely to confirm that graphics was well above the national average whilst results in food

technology were well below. Also, results in 2004 for textiles and resistant materials were both above the national average for 2003, and included a significant improvement in boys' results.

71. Achievement is satisfactory overall throughout the school and standards are in line with national averages by Years 9 and 11. However, students do not achieve as well as they should in food studies where standards are well below average. Analysis of students' work shows that standards could be improved during Years 7 to 9 if there were greater emphasis placed on the importance and presentation of each piece of work and on the use of new technology. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the development of students' own ideas, on research into existing similar products and the evaluation of the final outcome. Although teaching assistants are often available, they are not always deployed to provide maximum benefit to students with special needs. Consequently the literacy and presentation skills of these students are slow to develop. In Years 10 and 11, students have insufficient understanding of the whole design process and are therefore not able to organise their work to maximise examination results.
72. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall and are stronger in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Year 7 and 8 students rapidly gain confidence when completing work sheets that provide knowledge and understanding. They learn to measure and calculate quantities when preparing to cut and shape materials. They often demonstrate aptitude and enthusiasm, especially when engaged in practical activities. Those with particular skills are quickly identified and encouraged to enhance their work. Teacher assessment results show that the students are above average at the end of Year 9. However, some have difficulty in completing work if the design process is not divided to provide short-term and tangible goals that they can achieve. Teachers set homework on a regular basis and students say that they appreciate rapid feedback and the use of National Curriculum levels to grade work.
73. Departmental leadership is satisfactory and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The head of department has been effective in improving resources and accommodation although there is scope for further improvements particularly in the availability of computer-aided manufacturing equipment. The curriculum has been comprehensively mapped so that with some input from the information and communication technology department for the teaching of control, it meets statutory requirements. However, more use of metals, plastics and some electronics would provide a wider range of experiences. The department has some useful links with outside organisations.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

74. Art and design and music were inspected in depth. **Drama** was sampled and only two lessons were seen during the inspection. Teaching was good with activities that were both challenging and rewarding which enabled the students to achieve well. They knew how the use of body language and space contributes to effective performances. A particular strength is the way students co-operate with and support each other. The drama curriculum is closely linked to citizenship as there are regular planned opportunities for the exploration of important social and moral issues, such as domestic abuse and violence.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good and often very good teaching, in particular in Years 10 and 11, enables students to achieve very well and attain GCSE examination grades above national averages.
- The good leadership and very effective management of the department have led to consistently high standards being maintained over time.
- The positive attitudes and very good behaviour of students ensure that the ethos for learning is positive, supportive and inclusive.
- The taught curriculum is well-balanced and offers a wide experience of researching and handling different media, but there is insufficient enrichment through visits and clubs.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

75. Achievement is good throughout the school. Standards are average by Year 9 and above average by Year 11, meeting the appropriately high expectations that teachers have of both behaviour and work. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations in 2003 was above national averages. Provisional results for 2004 indicate an improving trend. Students perform well against other subjects in the school. The numbers taking GCSE are currently falling; if continued this could lead to the subject becoming unsustainable in future years.
76. The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good; students learn very well as a result. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are of a very good quality, shown most clearly in evidence drawn from portfolios of work and sketchbooks. Students research their personal studies thoroughly and produce work that is thoughtful, well annotated and imaginatively presented. The well managed self-evaluation sessions that start most lessons, enable students to become more confident in explaining their own critical views on artwork. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others, because they are well known to staff and are challenged appropriately. Students are well behaved in lessons and have very positive and supportive attitudes to their work, enabling a positive working ethos to be promoted, which allows all students to achieve to the best of their ability.
77. The curriculum is well balanced, offering a very good learning experience to students. Both two and three-dimensional work is developed through research and making processes, enabling students to learn to handle different media effectively and imaginatively. Currently it is not enriched through visits, clubs and other activities. The head of department has plans in hand to set up an after-school club and to continue with the visits and use of visiting artists that were features of art in previous years. One shortcoming is that the accommodation is unsatisfactory; it is cramped and cluttered and detracts from the high standard of work on display, lowering the visual standards of the department.
78. The head of department provides good leadership, working well with a colleague who shares his commitment to high standards. He manages the department very well, ensuring that very good records are kept of students' progress and keeping the

curriculum interesting and challenging. Under his leadership the department has made a good improvement since the previous inspection.

## Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average by Year 9, although expectations are not high enough for all GCSE students.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities for extra-curricular activities and instrumental tuition.
- Resources and accommodation have improved since the last inspection.

### Commentary

79. Achievement is satisfactory across most year groups, but with variations particularly in Years 10 and 11. Standards in music are below the national average in these year groups. GCSE examination results in 2003 and 2004 were good from low take-up of able musicians, so that comparisons with national figures are not valid. No Year 10 lessons were observed although numbers taking music in this year group have increased. Students in Year 10 showed excellent musical compositions. However, achievement in Year 11 is unsatisfactory with few examples of completed course work and no rigorous assessment procedure. Listening and theory lessons take place on an ad hoc basis with no systematic approach. In Year 8 and 9 the majority produced excellent musical composition with a small minority under performing. Students in Year 8 performed excellent *Variation on a Theme* while in Year 9 students produced choral progression which the majority performed satisfactorily. The majority of students are motivated and confident and a small number of students produce results beyond expectation.
80. The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and is more effective in Years 7 to 9 where learning is good than in Years 10 and 11. Teaching shows excellent subject knowledge. Students have a good understanding of what is expected of them in individual lessons. However, schemes of work are not well developed with little evidence of progression despite weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. All abilities are encouraged to extend themselves and girls and boys achieve equally well. Students enjoy lessons and respond with enthusiasm.
81. Leadership has been unsatisfactory with unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection notable in assessment and schemes of work. There is not a clear strategy for the development of the subject, expectations are not sufficiently high and forward planning is weak. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are being covered, although the use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped for Years 7 to 9. The use of information and communication technology for Years 10 and 11 has been addressed although software is limited. Accommodation has improved but with no soundproofing. Use of headphone would create a quieter environment. Resources such as percussion instruments are limited.

82. Students take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities including orchestra, band, choir and ensembles, although take up rates are comparatively low. However, the uptake of instrumental tuition is above the national average and increasing and many gain accreditation. Two concerts are held annually along with music provided for worship. Considerable commitment is shown to maintain these activities. Few cross-curricular links exist at present.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

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

- Students in all years make good progress, although unsatisfactory features of the accommodation and shortages of specialist staffing limit students' learning.
- Teachers have very good subject expertise which they use to good effect so that students enjoy the subject and have very good relationships with their teachers.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

#### **Commentary**

83. Students' standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are wide ranging but are mostly in line or just below the national expectation. By reaching average standards at the end of Year 9, students have achieved well. The majority of boys in Years 7 to 9 quickly master new skills and tactics in rugby. When playing hockey, girls have secure dribbling and passing skills. Students are able to warm-up independently and effectively because teachers emphasise this aspect at the start of each lesson. Students in Year 10 attain average standards in hockey, basketball, rugby and aerobics in their core lessons. They build on previous learning and their achievement is good. It was not possible to see any Year 11 lessons in the core programme. GCSE results in 2003 were average and 2004 results were similar. Overtime students have achieved well in GCSE and better than in most of their other subjects. The majority of students presently studying the GCSE course have a good understanding of the theoretical aspects. This is mainly due to their teachers consistently relating theory to practice. Standards are above average and their achievement is good, particularly in the practical aspects of the course. However, the low level writing skills of a few students hinders their attainment. As part of the very good extra-curricular programme, many individual students and teams achieve very high standards in district, county and regional competitions in netball, cricket, rugby, football, basketball, hockey and athletics. These talented students benefit greatly from the very good opportunities their teachers provide.
84. Teaching and learning are consistently good; students have very positive attitudes and very good relationships with their teachers. Teachers quickly improve students' practical skills by giving a good visual image on which students can base their performance. Students' learning benefits by the division of some year groups into ability. This encourages all students, extending the more able and giving security to those who find the activities more difficult. Support teachers and teaching assistants give much help to students with special educational needs allowing them to achieve as well as others in the

group. In a few lessons insufficient opportunities are given for students to work independently and on tasks that improve their evaluative skills.

85. The joint heads of department provide very good leadership and management for the subject. They give very good support and guidance, based on the new and comprehensive schemes of work, to six teachers who only teach a few lessons in the department and to trainee teachers. The lack of another more permanent teacher makes for many difficulties and effects the time on physical education activities for one group of students. Very good improvements have been made since the previous inspection, most notably the GCSE results, the quality of teaching and the accuracy of assessment. Planning is not detailed enough to contribute consistently to literacy, numeracy, citizenship and the development of information and communication technology skills. The gymnasium is the only specialist indoor facility which is not shared with other subject areas. The courts are presently not in operation. This unsatisfactory accommodation considerably hinders students' learning.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

86. Students follow the applied GCSE course in **business studies**. Two sessions were observed. In one Year 11 lesson, the four students were completing assignments comparing and contrasting two businesses in the area. Their work was of a high standard and they applied themselves well as they improved the work following advice from their teacher. The Year 10 lesson was much less successful. The wide range of ability in the class was not taken into account in planning or in direct teaching about types of business such as franchises. The teacher allowed one or two to dominate questioning and did not check the understanding of most of the students. There was no clear objective for the lesson and it was not clear how much many had learnt by the end. Several students already seemed to have lost motivation even though the course had only been running for about a month.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

87. The **personal, social and health education** programme is taught through a variety of mechanisms. Sex and drugs education science lessons are supplemented, in Years 7 to 9, by a series of half-day conferences. The students appreciate these times in assisting them to remember the key information and in enabling them to explore the practical and emotional aspects of the issues. In Years 10 and 11, weekly lessons are included using a variety of outside speakers and staff-taught units. Year 11 students responded excellently to a very well taught lesson on AIDS that supported this aspect of their learning very well. Year 10 students were taught a satisfactory session on smoking and how people fit stereotypes. Again the very good input from outside speakers is particularly appreciated when covering sensitive health issues and topics have been added to the curriculum following a student survey. There are regular opportunities to develop other personal skills such as the whole-school coffee morning; all of these contribute to a good provision for personal social and health education.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, committed and well-informed.
- The subject does not make the contribution to students' personal development which it could.
- The quality and extent of students' experiences of citizenship vary considerably depending on their year group, their tutor group and who their subject teachers are.
- Planned citizenship lessons and conferences make a very good contribution to students' knowledge and skills in this subject.



## Commentary

88. Citizenship fits well into the school's comprehensive programme of study for personal, social and health education. Citizenship issues are currently being addressed through subjects, augmented by occasional half-day citizenship conferences and specific citizenship lessons.
89. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are in line with national averages. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. During conferences and citizenship lessons, teachers work from clear objectives and make good use of role-play, games, simulations and outside speakers. Where citizenship is planned for and identified in other subjects, students exhibit a good understanding of issues within society. However, several subjects are making little or no contribution to the subject. Having no policy on citizenship, they do not see it as an entitlement, with the result that some teachers may include citizenship in their planning whereas others will not. Even in planned lessons the citizenship element often remains implicit, and aims are not clearly explained to the students.
90. Assessment is developing and students are involved in deciding how well they have understood the issues and benefited from the activities. The thoroughness with which these forms are filled in varies from one tutor group to another and this is reflected in the variable quality of the reports to parents. Students are not always aware that they have encountered citizenship in lessons because the agreed systems are not being universally used.
91. Leadership is good, with a clear direction established for the subject. However, there are shortcomings in organisation that are leading to unsatisfactory management. The citizenship topics have been fleshed out with the activities used in conferences and citizenship lessons but lack any contribution from subject-taught elements. There is no system for regular communication between subject heads and the co-ordinator for citizenship, nor for the monitoring of teaching. This makes it hard for the coordinator to assess the quality and range of experiences for students.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Students' achievement	3
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well students learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
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	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
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).*