

INSPECTION REPORT

STEPNEY GREEN SCHOOL

Stepney, London

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100969

Headteacher: Sean McGrath

Lead inspector: Derek Hawley

Dates of inspection: October 18th – 20th 2004

Inspection number: 268470

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of students: | 11-16 |
| Gender of students: | Male |
| Number on roll: | 817 |
| School address: | Ben Johnson Road Stepney London |
| Postcode: | E1 4SD |
| Telephone number: | 020 7790 6361 |
| Fax number: | 020 7265 9766 |
| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr Harun Khan |
| Date of previous inspection: | 27 November 2002 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Stepney Green School is a boys' school situated in the East End of London. It draws its students from its immediate neighbourhood which is very disadvantaged, socially and economically. More than four-fifths of the students are eligible for free school meals. This is very high indeed compared with other schools locally and nationally (the national average is 15.6 per cent). Almost all (98 per cent) of the students are from the Sylheti-speaking Bangladeshi community with the remainder a mix of Asian, African, African-Caribbean and white students. It is a six form entry comprehensive school for boys aged 11 to 16. With 817 students on roll, it is slightly smaller than the average secondary school. There are students of all abilities, including higher attainers, but the overall attainment of boys joining the school is significantly below average with many having weak literacy skills. Almost all of the students have English as an additional language and about 10 per cent are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is high compared with national figures. The number of students joining or leaving the school at other than the normal times is three times the national average. A distinctive feature of the school is the scope of its partnerships with its community, other agencies and schools through a variety of local and nationally funded projects such as the New Deal for Communities. The school is heavily committed to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and has won a quality assurance award for its out of school hours provision.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| 2712 | Derek Hawley | Lead inspector | Citizenship English as an additional language |
| 9977 | Fran Luke | Lay inspector | |
| 12003 | Andrew Marfleet | Team inspector | English and literacy |
| 31238 | Gordon Clubb | Team inspector | Mathematics |
| 22370 | Peter Harwood | Team inspector | Science |
| 6364 | Geoff Strack | Team inspector | Information and communication technology (ICT) |
| 12336 | Malcolm Overend | Team inspector | Geography Special educational needs |
| 32297 | Chris Martin | Team inspector | History |
| 1880 | Garry Bignell | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages; religious education |
| 16773 | Raminder Arora | Team inspector | Community languages |
| 7084 | Jack Haslam | Team inspector | Technology |
| 31688 | Brian McGonagle | Team inspector | Art |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Stepney Green School is a much improved school with many good features which overall provides **satisfactory** education and satisfactory value for money. The very good leadership of the headteacher, backed by good support from other senior staff and governors, provides clear direction and strong capacity for continuing improvement. Clear leadership and improved management throughout the school have led to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and a better climate for learning. A significant proportion of students have weak literacy skills or are relatively new to learning English. Overall, standards are below average, but improving, and comparable with those in similar schools. Given the low starting points of many students, their achievement is satisfactory. Difficulty in finding suitably qualified teaching staff has in recent years affected standards but staffing is now much improved. Delays in refurbishing the school under the Private Finance Initiative, which are beyond the school's control, have hindered the drive for improvement and higher achievement.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English, mathematics and science, measured by national tests at the end of Year 9, are steadily improving and are the best on record in 2004.
- Leadership and management are good across the school. There is a strong focus on improving achievement further.
- The amount of good teaching has improved significantly since the school was last inspected; teaching is now good overall though some shortcomings remain.
- Though improved this year, GCSE results are inconsistent and are still not high enough.
- The school's good policy to improve literacy is not yet consistently followed in all classrooms.
- Community partnerships are very strong and have a positive impact on students' achievement.
- Too many students are late for school; this limits their learning and disturbs the learning of others.
- The improved climate for learning has a positive effect on students' attitudes to each other and to learning, both of which are good, but arrangements for acting on students' views are not yet strong enough.

The school has responded well to the last inspection and made good progress on the main issues raised then. Standards by the end of Year 9 are significantly higher, the proportion of good lessons seen is much improved and middle management is stronger.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance compared with: | | all schools | | | Similar schools |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2003 |
| Year 11 | GCSE/GNVQ examinations | D | C | E | C |

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students' achievement is **satisfactory** overall. Many join the school with below average attainment and literacy skills or are new to learning English. Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 but compare favourably with schools facing similar levels of disadvantage. Results in the 2004 Year 9 English and science tests were better because of measures taken to improve teaching, while mathematics maintained its good record. GCSE results have fluctuated in the last three years, mainly because of staffing problems, and are below the national average for boys. However, a higher proportion of students gain 5 higher level (A*-C) GCSE passes including English and mathematics than the average for boys in other schools in the borough. The school is also

successful in enabling a large proportion of its students to pass five GCSE examinations. 2004 results show an improvement on 2003. Standards seen in lessons are higher than recent test and examination results suggest, again because teaching is improving.

Students' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **good**. Most have good attitudes to learning and benefit from the high expectations and the good climate established in the school. Most students behave well but there is a small minority who are less co-operative. Behaviour continues to improve and is satisfactory overall. Attendance is average but punctuality to school is unsatisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and well supported by the school's expectations and atmosphere.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education. There are some good and very good features. On balance teaching and learning are **good** but some weaknesses remain. Teaching in physical education is very strong. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, information and communications technology, technology, Bengali, modern foreign languages, art and music. Good teaching is more apparent in Years 10 and 11; weaker teaching in Year 8. Teachers are knowledgeable and plan varied lessons for the wide range of needs they encounter. Relationships are good. As a result most students are interested, motivated and learn well. In some lessons there is not enough emphasis on encouraging students to develop their literacy skills through speaking. Some teachers do not make good use of students' capacity to work things out together or to learn independently. Teachers' use of assessment to diagnose areas of weakness in students' work and help them focus on how to improve is not sharp enough. The curriculum is satisfactory and enhanced by a very good range of out of school activities, particularly in sport and outdoor pursuits. Links with the community are very strong and links with parents and other schools are good. Support for students is good. The school is effective in meeting the needs of the full range of its students. Students with special needs or who are at an early stage of learning English make satisfactory progress because of effective support.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management are **good**. The school is very well led by the headteacher, who is well supported by other key staff. The headteacher's clear vision is widely shared by staff and by knowledgeable, committed and supportive governors. The way leading governors work is good and this challenges the school to improve further but some statutory requirements are not fully met. The school is outward looking and the emphasis on community and partnerships has a good impact on teaching and learning and is one of the reasons that standards are rising. Another reason is the focus senior managers have given to improving teaching through training, monitoring and recruiting new staff. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and it is already aware of the main issues for improvement identified by the inspection.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents, though not all, are supportive, appreciate the opportunities the school offers and have confidence in its quality and leadership. They believe that the school is improving but add that it should improve further. Some have concerns about behaviour. Most students are positive about the school particularly its atmosphere and teaching, though there are some dissenting voices among older students. Some students have concerns about behaviour, bullying and the extent to which students' views influence the school. Inspectors found behaviour improved and satisfactory but noted that a small minority of students still do not behave properly. There is some bullying but the range of measures for dealing with it are good. There have been several worthwhile initiatives to seek students' views, but the school does not yet do enough to show students that it takes account of their views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school is much improved but there is more to do. The most important things it should do to improve further are:

- raise standards and achievement further, particularly students' literacy skills and GCSE results;
- improve teaching and learning by identifying the best teaching so that good practice in developing students' skills in speaking and thinking is used across all subjects in support of higher literacy skills;
- use assessment to focus sharply on what students need to do to improve ;
- work with parents and students to improve punctuality;
- improve further the school's good climate by taking more account of students' views;

and, to fully meet statutory requirements:

- in consultation with the outside agency responsible for the school site, give attention to reported health and safety issues arising from delays (outside the school's control) in carrying through improvements to the buildings;
- ensure that all requirements for the governors' annual report to parents are met;
- achieve full coverage of curriculum requirements for information and communication technology (ICT).

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards by the end of Year 9 and by Year 11 in GCSE are below the national average. However, students' achievement is satisfactory given the low starting points of many. Overall, students' attainment is below average when they join the school. A significant number have low standards of literacy. Many more students than is usual are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with special needs is high. All of these factors have an impact on standards but, as a result of good teaching, students make satisfactory progress overall and do as well as might be expected.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The proportion of students reaching the expected levels in English and science by the end of Year 9 has been steadily improving while in mathematics good achievement has been maintained. However, the proportion of students gaining the higher levels in English and science is not high enough.
- Achievement taking into account the progress students make from low starting points is good in several subjects by Year 9 and Year 11.
- Standards are higher than in similar schools.
- Overall standards by Year 11 are below the national average. GCSE results improved in 2004 but have been inconsistent and are not yet high enough.
- In 2004 the proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSE passes including English and mathematics was higher than the national average for boys.

Commentary

1. Standards are below national averages in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. The attainment of students joining the school in Year 7 is below average. Evidence from local borough reading tests and cognitive abilities tests shows that literacy levels are significantly below average. There are higher attaining students who go on to do well but there are proportionately fewer of them than in most comprehensive schools. In addition, there are significant numbers of students who are at an early stage of learning English and a higher proportion than in most schools who join the school after Year 7. The proportion of students with special needs is also higher than usual. So, while there are many students who have reached the expected level in English and mathematics in Year 6 before leaving primary school, overall attainment on entry is significantly below average.

2. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 improved markedly in 2004. Recent trends have been in line with the national trend. Though results are below average, the proportion of students who reach the expected level (Level 5) in English, mathematics and science has been increasing steadily, so that the 2004 results are the best in the school's history. The proportion of students achieving higher levels (Level 6 and above) is best in mathematics, where overall results in recent years have been close to the national average, indicating good achievement. Given students' starting points, their achievement by Year 9 is good in English and satisfactory in science. However, the proportion of students achieving Level 6 and above in English and science is not yet high enough.

3. Standards seen during the inspection were above the national expectation by Year 9 in Bengali, in line with the national expectation in mathematics, information and communications technology (ICT), design and technology, art and physical education and below the national expectation in English, science, modern languages, history, geography, religious education, music and citizenship.

4. Although standards are below average overall, students make satisfactory progress during Years 7 to 9, given the low starting points of many. Their achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory overall and good in a number of subjects. By the end of Year 9 achievement is very good in art and good in English, mathematics, design and technology, Bengali, music and physical education. It is satisfactory in science, modern languages, ICT, history, geography and religious education.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results – boys |
|---------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| English | 29.6 (27.7) | 32.1(31.9) |
| Mathematics | 34.5 (32.2) | 35.4 (34.8) |
| Science | 28.1(27.5) | 33.7 (33.4) |

There were 180 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

* The latest year for which comparative figures are available.

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

| | School results | National results – boys |
|---|----------------|-------------------------|
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades | 30 (49) | 47.5 (46) |
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades | 84 (86) | 84 (84.5) |
| Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades | 96 (100) | 93.6 (93.6) |
| Average point score per student (best eight subjects) | 28.8 (33.7) | 32.6 (32.5) |

There were 210 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

* The latest year for which comparative figures are available.

5. Standards in GCSE examinations improved in 2004 but are still well below the national average for boys though similar to the local average. The percentage gaining 5 or more higher (A*-C) GCSE grades in 2004 was up on the previous year at 36 per cent but well below the school's best results in 2002. Though results are rising, the trend is below the national trend and the school is falling short of its ambitious targets. An explanation for this is the impact of severe staffing difficulties in the recent past which undermined standards. These difficulties are now largely resolved. A strength of the 2004 results is the proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSE grades and 1 or more GCSE grades, which is above the national average. This reflects the school's intention that all students should aspire to examination success no matter how recent their learning of English or the nature of their special needs. Higher attaining students often do well. A higher proportion of students at Stepney Green School achieve five or more higher (A*-C) GCSE passes, including English and mathematics than the average for boys in other local schools. Standards in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection were above average in ICT and Bengali. Standards were average in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, art and physical education. Standards were below average in English, modern languages, religious education and music. Standards seen during the inspection were higher than those achieved in recent examinations, indicating that teaching is better and that achievement is rising.

6. Achievement by Year 11 is satisfactory overall. During Years 10 and 11 students build on the work done in the first three years and in many cases achieve better than their test results at the end of Year 9 suggest they will. This is not true in all subjects and this explains why overall achievement is satisfactory. Where examination achievement is higher, this is often because teachers know examination requirements well, place much emphasis on examination preparation

and offer additional opportunities for students to study outside normal school hours. The achievement of higher attaining students is very good for some individuals and satisfactory overall. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, history, Bengali music and GCSE physical education. It is satisfactory in modern languages, design and technology, geography, religious education, art and core physical education.

7. Achievement across the school is satisfactory overall and good in some subjects because an increasing amount of the teaching is good. Leadership in the school has been focused on raising standards through improved teaching and learning and this is paying off, though there is still more to do. The emphasis on well-planned, swiftly moving lessons with clear expectations of what students should learn and clear targets is raising standards. The improved climate for learning in most lessons is also having a positive effect on achievement. There has been a clear improvement in test results for Year 9 students since the last inspection and compared with schools in similar circumstances the school does well.

8. The school aims to include all students in improved achievement. There is well-focused support for students at an early stage of learning English through partnership teaching so that their achievement too is satisfactory and some individual students make great strides not only in learning English but in many other areas of the curriculum. Most supported students achieve or exceed their targets.

9. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall because teachers have a real awareness of the needs of students and provide effective support in the classrooms or through withdrawal programmes to ensure progress is made. Students with special needs often do better at Stepney Green by Year 11 than in other schools in the borough.

10. Standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening are below average. Some students are very competent readers and write fluently but many have difficulty in advancing their literacy skills and this is a barrier to their progress. There are some extremely able speakers, as evidenced by the school's success in public speaking events, but again across the school many students are reluctant users of their speaking and listening skills in lessons.

11. Students' competence in mathematics is average and better developed than their literacy skills. They use their mathematics skills successfully in several areas of the curriculum. There are relatively few opportunities for students to use their mathematics skills across the curriculum but when called upon to do so many can apply them successfully.

12. Students' competence in ICT lessons is average up to Year 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. However, students have too few opportunities across the curriculum as a whole to develop and apply these skills and in this respect their ability to demonstrate their skills in a variety of situations is below average.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Most students feel that the school sets appropriate standards for their behaviour and has high expectations of them. As a result students' attitudes to school are good. Behaviour is satisfactory in that most students behave well, though a minority do not. Students' attendance at school is satisfactory but punctuality to school is unsatisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good attitudes to school and to their learning; they are motivated and interested in their work.
- Too many students arrive late for school.
- Students form supportive relationships with each other and with staff and are effective in working together in teams and groups and this enhances their personal development.

- The school works effectively to deal with all forms of harassment, but bullying remains a concern to some students and parents.
- Students are encouraged successfully to develop their spiritual awareness through reflection and prayer and develop an understanding of their own and beliefs and the beliefs of others.
- There are good opportunities for students to take on additional responsibility.

Commentary

13. The school works hard to ensure students come to school. Attendance has improved since the last inspection because of a range of measures including electronic registration and telephoning parents on the first day of absence. The level of attendance at the school is similar to that in secondary schools nationally and is therefore satisfactory. The level of unauthorised absence is high. This is mainly due to the number of parents who continue to take their children out of school for holidays during term time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (per cent) – 2002/3

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|------|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 91.1 | School data | 4.3 |
| National data | 91.7 | National data | 1.1 |

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

14. During the inspection a significant number of students arrived late to school, which disrupted the start to the school day and undermined their learning and that of others. Some parents do not make enough effort to get their children to school on time. Punctuality is unsatisfactory.

15. Students are aware of the school's code of conduct and staff are active in upholding it. There is a clear behaviour policy supported by a progressive range of sanctions. Behaviour is satisfactory overall and continues to improve. Visitors to the school, community workers and older students testify to the improvement. Where teachers have high expectations in lessons, behaviour is good, which encourages a good working atmosphere. However, when students are less focused and the management of lessons is weak, behaviour deteriorates and students lose interest. Many students are proud of their school and behave appropriately. There is good support for the small minority of disaffected students. Behaviour at lunch and break times is satisfactory. The limitations of the accommodation can affect behaviour, particularly on overcrowded staircases as students move between classes, but usually changeovers are orderly.

16. The number of exclusions has been falling but there was a high number of exclusions last school year. This use of fixed period exclusions has been part of the school's strategy to establish high expectations of acceptable behaviour and is having a positive effect. The school has set up an inclusion panel which reviews individual students' progress and brings in external support. The learning support unit takes students at risk of, or returning from, exclusion and gives advice to departments on behaviour management: it provides good specialist support for students with behaviour problems, often with effective help from learning mentors and outside agencies. Staff work with students in small groups or on a one-to-one basis, enabling students at risk of exclusion to continue learning.

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 |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 854 | 90 | 7 |

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

17. Students' attitudes to their work are generally good. Most students are supportive of the school and well motivated by positive management, which encourages them to work hard and to do their best. This means that there is overall a positive atmosphere throughout the school.

18. Relationships in the school are good and have a positive impact on the way students deal with each other and with staff. The school works very hard to overcome bullying and racism. At the pre-inspection parents' evening, some parents raised concerns over bullying, however, no incidents were seen during the inspection and students spoken to were confident that when incidents occur, staff deal with them very quickly and effectively. Students say they value the help and support from student mentors who help them feel comfortable and safe when moving around the school and playground.

19. There are good opportunities for students to take on additional responsibility. In Year 7, students act as ambassadors for the school by visiting local primary schools to talk to the pupils about the school. There are opportunities to serve on the school council and to represent the school in a variety of competitive events. Older students act as mentors to younger students and as prefects. Students respond positively to these opportunities and grow in maturity and responsibility as they move through the school.

20. Many students with special educational needs find learning difficult and sometimes have difficulty concentrating on their work. They value the additional support provided in classrooms by teachers and teaching assistants which helps them to make appropriate progress in their studies and motivates them to make a real effort to succeed or to resolve their behaviour or language difficulties.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

21. Students' spiritual development is good. The development of students' self-awareness and understanding of their relationship to the world around them is a priority for the school. They are actively encouraged to ask questions and to raise issues relating to spirituality. Teachers provide them with good opportunities to acquire greater awareness and deeper understanding of themselves and others. This is done through exploration, investigation and enquiry, for example, in exploring self and identity in art and citizenship or exploring spiral forms believed to have spiritual values in design and technology. In English lessons there are often discussions concerned with the meaning and purpose of life. The students' own religious background provides them with a very good starting point from which they can deepen their spiritual awareness. During lunch times, students of all ages gather in the hall to pray. They are extremely well organised and they are involved in both private and collective prayer.

22. There is a school Code of Conduct that clearly identifies behaviour that is right or wrong. This is based on students' knowledge and understanding of the moral codes in their own and other cultures. Students are encouraged to express their views on issues of right and wrong, to develop greater awareness of their own values and make judgements after a period of reflection and consideration, for example, on homelessness in English or ethical issues such as abortion and euthanasia in religious education. Bullying and conflict resolution are major topics in personal, social and health education. Students' moral development is good.

Example of outstanding practice

A period of collective prayer

It was lunchtime and students from every age group in the school had gathered in the main hall to pray. No teacher was present, but the group of some seventy-five students worked methodically to prepare the hall. They spread long prayer mats on the floor facing Mecca. With no prompting, or any form of external discipline, they organised themselves into four parallel lines behind one student whose role was leader of the prayer. By now the group size had grown to almost two hundred, and yet more came, slipped off their shoes and quietly joined the others. This was a very impressive display of self-discipline, organisation and religious belief. The students had great respect for one another and took this process very seriously. They were joined by one of their teachers who adopted the role of imam. Facing Mecca, with the congregation behind him in rows, he led the prayers. When this congregational prayer session had finished, the boys quietly and quickly returned the prayer mats to their original locations, put on their shoes and left the hall, making hardly a sound as they went.

23. Students' social development is good. The school has been successful in creating a positive ethos within which individual students relate well to one another and work effectively in groups. Through the school council, students share their opinions and views and participate in decision-making that has an impact on the whole school community. In subjects such as English, there are many examples of students learning to work as members of a team, and to discuss social issues found in their texts. Most students are keen to develop their sense of responsibility for others and some have written to the headteacher raising issues about their immediate environment. In physical education, there are many good examples of group and teamwork, which is a strong feature of most lessons. Students are taught the importance of working with others in a socially responsible manner. There is a very good mentoring system which involves Year 10 students working closely with younger students in Year 7.

24. Students' cultural development is good. Teachers ensure that students are aware of their own cultural and religious backgrounds as well as their place in a multi-cultural British society. However, there are few examples of displays in the foyer and in the corridors that reflect the cultural background of the students. The languages department organises trips to France and Spain and in November of this year, Year 11 students will visit Paris. The art department successfully introduces students to the work of European artists such as Salvador Dali and Van Gogh. In music there is a very clear understanding of how music reflects the culture out of which it has grown. With the stated intention of extending their cultural awareness, the English department exposes students to poetry from countries around the world. In addition, trips to theatres are organised and theatre groups are invited in to the school. The school is very active in pursuing its stated aim of providing its students with an education that is built upon their beliefs, values and cultural background.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory overall; there are many good features. The quality of teaching is much improved and good though some shortcomings remain. The curriculum is growing in its range and is clearly enhanced by additional activities outside the school day. Accommodation, in spite of some progress in refurbishment, is poor in some areas and this is a barrier to improvement. Students are well cared for and supported though there are some concerns about health and safety. There are very good links with the community and good partnerships with parents and other institutions.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is on balance good and this leads to good learning, but there is room for further improvement. Teaching has improved significantly since the school was last inspected. The teaching leads to good learning overall. Teaching is stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is now good or better in nearly two-thirds of lessons and this has a good effect on students' learning.

- Teaching in physical education is very good. The range of teaching approaches develops students' skills in working together and self-evaluation strongly.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects is strong and their planning is effective with a focus on explaining what is required to students.
- The school's planned approach to literacy across the curriculum is not consistently applied by teachers.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good so that lessons often move at a brisk pace and students learn effectively through working together.
- Assessment and marking, though satisfactory, do not pay enough attention to diagnosing exactly what students need to do to improve and setting clear learning targets for improvement.
- Weak organisation and management of students' behaviour in a minority of lessons mean that in some lessons teaching is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 140 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 3(2 %) | 16 (11 %) | 69(49 %) | 43 (31 %) | 9 (6 %) | 0 (0%) | 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.

25. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Much more of the teaching is good or very good. As a result students' learning has improved and is also good and is having a positive effect on their progress. In 2002 the school was asked to give priority to increasing the amount of good teaching. In the last two years the leadership of the school has focused on improving teaching. There has been a strong emphasis on training in the use of the methods promoted by the National Strategy for teaching and learning which has had a good impact on teachers' thinking and methods. There is also regular and detailed monitoring of lessons. Recruitment of new staff has strengthened the quality of teaching. During the inspection almost two-thirds of the teaching was good or better. The same was true of students' learning. The vast majority of students are well motivated and make good use of their time in lessons. Students agree that they are well taught as do their parents.

26. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. There are more lessons with shortcomings in Year 8 than elsewhere in the school. There are lessons of very good and outstanding quality spread across several subjects but the proportion of such lessons is lower than in many schools. Examples of very good and excellent lessons were most often seen in physical education and music but there were also examples in English, mathematics, science, ICT and French.

27. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects is usually good so that they are able to explain clearly. There is an emphasis on students understanding technical vocabulary. Planning is a strength of many lessons. Lessons move at a good pace because they are well organised. Teachers use a range of lively and interesting approaches to involve students in the learning and review what has been learned effectively at the end. There is a good understanding of examination and test requirements and students' attention is often drawn to the way they need to work if they are to improve their performance. Teachers' use of ICT is improving, partly as a result of recently installed interactive white boards, but the impact of ICT on students' learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

28. Further strengths of the teaching and learning lie in the good climate for learning which now exists in the school. Most students have positive attitudes and are willing to learn. There are good relationships between teachers and students in most classrooms. Students sometimes work effectively together in group and pair work, though these skills are not highly developed. Students

respond well to opportunities to show initiative and to work independently, but not all teaching encourages this. Teaching is often challenging and students show they can rise to the challenge when discussing complex issues for example in English, science and history.

29. Some of the teaching has shortcomings, even where teaching is judged satisfactory. Six per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. Teachers don't always plan effectively for the time available and run out of time to complete what they have planned, lacking the flexibility to adapt planned learning to the circumstances. In a number of lessons the teaching does not give enough time or emphasis to encouraging students to think things through and analyse. This can arise because teachers talk too much or are over-reliant on working through printed resources. In a small minority of lessons weak organisation and behaviour management mean that little is achieved and teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.

30. The majority of teachers make every effort to cater for the needs of students with special needs. Teachers provide tasks and materials appropriate to their needs. They place students carefully in the classroom so they gain support from colleagues and additional help from teachers and learning support assistants. This enhances their learning and contributes to satisfactory achievement. Specialist support from teaching assistants and other specialist support staff is spread thinly, but effective where it exists.

31. Students at an early stage of learning English are supported through partnership teaching, mainly in examination groups: there is effective partnership teaching in which a specialist support teacher joins the subject teacher. Recently arrived students with little English clearly benefit from additional support in lessons and their achievement is satisfactory. Managers of the department supporting new learners of English provide useful back up to colleagues in preparing additional materials and advising departments. There are satisfactory induction arrangements for newly arrived students whose English is limited.

32. Teachers know which students have been identified as gifted and talented and many (but not all) make appropriate arrangements to make their learning more challenging during lessons by providing materials which demand higher levels of thinking and analysis and in additional activities and classes after school.

33. There is some very good practice designed to improve students' literacy skills. The emphasis on developing students' speaking skills is a good example of how the school is working with some success to improve students' literacy. However, the impact of this work is not strong enough because not all teachers are applying the policy and teachers need further training.

34. Procedures for assessing students' work are satisfactory. The school has made satisfactory progress in this aspect of its work since the last inspection and there are some good features. The policy provides a useful framework. A range of relevant examination, test and assessment data is stored centrally and analysed to check progress and identify strategies for dealing with different groups of students. This aspect of monitoring student's progress centrally and analyzing data to target intervention, involve parents and support students is good. The information is passed on to departments but teachers' use of the data to inform their planning is variable. The impact of the data the school has on students' achievement is not strong enough because it is not well used by all subjects.

35. Each student has a target for each subject based on National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. The targets set a general challenge, but do not in themselves encourage teachers to think about and make clear to students the particular knowledge and skills students need to develop in order to improve. In this sense the current arrangements for assessment do not place enough emphasis on diagnosing areas of weaknesses in students' work and helping them to focus on where improvements are needed. There is a weakness in the use of targets for students with special educational needs because targets set relate to general grades or levels and do not take into account students' individual education plans.

36. Students' books are marked up to date. There is a comprehensive school marking policy which contains much good advice about constructive marking, but this is not universally applied.

Some subjects follow school marking policy on effort and attainment grades, but there is a lack of consistency. It is not always clear whether grades are meant to be National Curriculum levels or school effort or attainment grades. Most teacher comments are about spelling, improving presentation and giving more detail. Constructive marking which give subject-specific advice on how to improve and reach the next level is relatively sparse and mainly seen in English, religious education and history.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall. The range of additional activities is very good. Arrangements to link students' learning to the world of work are satisfactory. The poor state of some of the school's accommodation limits the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good range of activities and additional opportunities for learning outside school hours has a positive impact on students' personal development and achievement.
- The poor quality of some of the accommodation is a barrier to further improvements.
- There is an increasing range of courses and activities which relate the curriculum to the world of work but the vocational curriculum is not yet strongly established.
- The quality of teaching staff and their match to the school's curriculum is much improved.
- There is not enough use of ICT across the whole curriculum.

Commentary

37. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for its students. The school seeks to include all students in access to the curriculum and in academic success. In this it is largely successful and arrangements for inclusion are good: the curriculum meets the needs of the diverse range of students and in almost all respects meets statutory requirements. The school aims to keep the curriculum flexible so that students are provided with as much choice as possible. This choice helps to motivate students and improves their learning and achievement. A strength is the inclusion of information and communications technology for all students as an important part of the strategy for improving students' communication skills.

38. The curriculum does not allow for full coverage of all aspects of design and technology in Years 7 to 9. The use of computers across the curriculum is a weakness because students do not have enough opportunities to apply the skills learnt in ICT lessons or to improve their skills in the aspects of the ICT curriculum dealing with sensing and control. Drama plays an unusually limited part in the curriculum.

39. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory in that it meets the needs of the wide range of students. There are a number of positive features including the recent introduction of examination courses in business and entrepreneurship, but qualifications related to the world of work and leading on to further work-related training are not yet a distinctive feature so that, while adequate, the curriculum range for older students has limitations. Opportunities to take advanced supplementary examinations in mathematics help drive up aspirations and standards.

40. The curriculum meets the needs of students who are at an early stage of learning English reasonably well. Specialist support teachers work in partnership with subject teachers. This is mostly found in Years 10 and 11 and supports students with limited capability in English in a way which enables them to follow the curriculum, prepare for examinations and make satisfactory progress. This additional support is spread thinly in classes below Year 10 so that all teachers need a strong awareness of appropriate strategies for helping students whose English skills are limited. Many teachers have this awareness but where it is not in evidence some students have difficulty gaining full access to the curriculum.

41. Students with special educational needs follow the same curriculum as other students and provision is good. Learning difficulties are addressed through numerous strategies and staff awareness of special needs is generally good. The effective work of learning support staff in co-operation with teachers enables students with special needs to have access to the curriculum and to make satisfactory progress. The learning support unit provides specialist support for students with behaviour problems through small group work or on a one-to-one basis, often with effective help from learning mentors and outside agencies. A small number of students are appropriately disapplied from parts of the curriculum to allow them to follow more relevant courses at the local college and this works well.

42. There is good provision for students identified as either gifted or talented. Teachers are aware of such students and plan for their needs in lessons. A member of staff oversees this area of the school's work. The school has developed partnerships with the community and other schools to provide for individual students' needs. These arrangements have a good impact on achievement. For example, the school can demonstrate that Year 9 students identified as gifted or talented make good progress.

43. This is a school that is working successfully to change the perception of the local community towards education. The school has forged very good links with the local community at all levels and these enhance the curriculum, particularly in sport and physical recreation, mathematics, personal, social and health education and citizenship. Parents are encouraged to attend extra classes and work alongside their children. Links with external agencies and other organisations provide valuable experiences for students.

44. The school provides a wide variety of work-related learning opportunities for its students. The range and quality of provision is satisfactory and has a satisfactory impact on learning. Students gain from well-organised work experience and there are work-related dimensions in several Year 10 and 11 courses. There is a good programme involving staff from local firms in mentoring groups of students. The school successfully seeks to raise students' aspirations by arranging access to several programmes beyond the school which enable students to find out more about the world of work and higher education.

45. Through its citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme the school makes satisfactory provision for education in sex and relationships, health, alcohol and drugs. Individuals and groups from outside the school are appropriately involved to add expertise and a fresh voice, for example a valued contribution is made by the Safer Schools police officer who is a frequent visitor to the school. The time available for the PSHE and citizenship programme in Years 10 and 11 is inadequate to cover the course at an appropriate depth.

46. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities which are appreciated by students. A high proportion of students use the school's facilities outside normal school hours. A strength of the school is staff commitment to out of hours learning. Nearly all teachers are responsible for at least one club or activity. The extent to which the school's curriculum goes beyond the usual lessons is very good. All activities are open to every student. There are many opportunities for students to work together both in school and on external visits. Students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and other outward bound courses. There is very good provision for extra-curricular sport. Many of these additional opportunities have a direct impact on students' personal development and achievement either through the study of extra GCSEs or through additional sessions where students build on what they have learned in school. The school provides good study support outside school hours to counter the lack of facilities or support that some students have at home. The curriculum beyond the school day is now broader and more relevant than at the time of the previous inspection with high levels of additional activities; good progress has been made.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

47. The match of teachers to the school's curriculum is now good. Following a period when staff recruitment proved difficult, the school has been much more successful in recruiting and

retaining well-qualified teaching staff, with the result that students of all age groups have good access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Non-teaching support staff make a good contribution to students' achievement. Office and curriculum support staff carry out their work efficiently. There are, however, support staff shortages in the library and in science which reduce the quality of provision, though it is satisfactory overall.

48. The recent creation of an attractive reception area is in stark contrast to the state of much of the school's other accommodation. As a result of the poor state of repair and decoration in many areas, subjects including design and technology, English, modern foreign languages, and science are not being taught efficiently. By contrast, in geography, history, ICT and some science laboratories, where refurbishment has taken place, the learning opportunities are significantly better. There are many bottlenecks and stairways and passageways become congested. This causes delay in moving between lessons and, while most students are sensible about this, some take advantage and are late for lessons. The limitations of accommodation are a barrier to further improvement. The school site offers little respite from concrete and bricks. There has been recent attention to improving outside seating for students. Substantial delays in bringing accommodation up to an appropriate standard through the Private Finance Initiative lie outside the school's control but school management and governors have been active in trying to move things forward.

49. Resources are satisfactory overall but there are some deficiencies. The ratio of computers to students is 1:6, which is close to the government target of 1:5 but many subjects have no access to computers. There are now 19 interactive whiteboards and teachers are beginning to use them to good effect to set up lessons and increase student participation by enabling them to share ideas and presentations with the whole class. The library is a good size, is well resourced and makes a strong contribution to students' learning. Some deficiencies in the provision and management of resources adversely affect students' achievement in art, design and technology, modern foreign languages and science.

Care, guidance and support

Overall, the care, guidance and support provided by the school are satisfactory and a number of features, particularly support by monitoring students' overall progress and personal development, are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is effective tracking and monitoring of overall student performance to focus advice and guidance
- The majority of students have good relationships with adults in the school and feel they can rely on an adult for support.
- Induction of students into all year groups is effective.
- Some students feel they do not have a voice in the school.
- There are some health and safety concerns arising from the arrangements for managing the school building.

Commentary

50. The school has a good range of support services available to help students. Students spoken to said they had a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school, in most cases their form tutor, the appropriate pastoral head but also the Safer Schools police officer, who is based in the school. The student questionnaire, however, showed that over a fifth of the students, especially older boys, felt there was no one to approach in the school that they trusted. There is an effective pastoral care system based on key stage managers.

51. The wide range and variety of support and guidance for students includes an effective induction procedure in Year 7 in which students have an opportunity to visit the school and to meet staff prior to transfer. This is reinforced by an induction unit that offers further support on entry to the school especially for vulnerable students and those who are new to learning English. A

mentoring system has been developed to encourage older students to support younger ones when they enter the school in Year 7. Students report that they find the mentoring opportunities very helpful and supportive. All the students spoken to felt they were well supported whenever they started at the school.

52. Academic support and guidance are good as they are based on detailed monitoring and tracking of individual students' progress. This means that tutors and heads of key stages are able to identify and react to underachievement or other problems. When underachieving students are identified effective remedial action is taken by pastoral staff who have access to a range of support agencies. There is a regular target setting process for students. The mentoring programme for older students is valued by them and has a good impact on their achievement. Some use is made of the student planners in tutor time and these help both parents and form tutors to communicate and raise any concerns over individual students.

53. Guidance on careers and further educational opportunities is satisfactory. Careers guidance is given via the personal, health and social education programme in Years 9 and 11 and an awareness of the world of work is fostered by work experience. There is a range of support and guidance services offered by the Connexions personal adviser. The adviser contributes towards the guidance given to students to inform their option choices in Year 9 and further study or employment after Year 11 but not all students are given this opportunity. The school provides sound guidance on option choices at the end of Year 9 and on post 16 opportunities in Year 11, when the majority of students have an in-depth interview. The Aimhigher programme in Year 9 is designed to raise student aspirations to pursue university courses. There is a range of adult mentors from the local community and businesses that support the learning of students especially those that experience difficulties. Students value this support which has a good effect on their attitudes to learning.

54. The school offers good support for vulnerable students, including those with special educational needs. There is an effective procedure for child protection, based on LEA guidelines, but not all staff are clear on who is the named person responsible for dealing with child protection. The school's provision for first aid and for caring for students who are unwell is appropriate. The school office has a number of trained first aiders and there is a medical room which is supervised by the office staff. There is a very comprehensive policy on the use of the internet and it is monitored to protect students.

55. There is a range of opportunities for students to take on extra responsibilities and these are taken up willingly but a significant minority of students does not feel that its views are heard and acted upon by the school. Students feel that teachers treat them fairly and are helpful, and that they have opportunities to be involved in the assessment of their work. Staff seek students' views through surveys and the school council. The school council is well established, and most students are clear about how the council structure operates to represent their views. Councillors themselves say that while they are effective in some areas, they are not always well supported by other students and some staff. This shows that successful outcomes of the council's work are not always being made sufficiently clear. There are good opportunities for older boys to take on additional responsibilities, for example as prefects or student mentors, offering support and guidance to others as well as listening to and passing on any concerns. Homework clubs are run by student mentors where boys can receive help with homework tasks. Students who take on these roles are highly regarded by their peers and are improving channels of communication.

56. Health and safety arrangements have some shortcomings. During the inspection a number of potential hazards were identified though some are difficult to remedy such as those caused by the poor accommodation, especially the narrow stairs. Flooring is a hazard in some areas and some cupboard doors need urgent repair. There is an unacceptable delay between the reporting of issues and remedial action being taken, a consequence of the buildings being managed by a private contractor under the Private Finance Initiative. There is a lack of fire safety notices in some areas of the school, and some fire doors and fire equipment are not in full working order. Health and safety procedures exist in the staff handbook but the monitoring to ensure that procedures are followed and that all areas are safe is not sharp enough.

57. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are good. Links with the community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Exciting and innovative partnerships between the school and the local community are raising achievement.
- The school uses a wide variety of external agencies to meet the individual needs of the students.
- The school has very good links with the local community.
- Parents have positive views of the school.
- There are good links with other schools and colleges.

Commentary

58. Exciting and innovative projects have been developed to raise achievement through establishing partnerships between the students, parents and the school. These operate throughout all year groups and range from reducing underachievement at transfer from the primary school to raising standards in the GCSE examinations. The school's commitment to the high profile it gives to community outreach is clearly seen in the recent creation of the post of Community Project Leader in the leadership team. This key post is raising the status of community activities further. Staff have been appointed to lead, manage and deliver these initiatives and evaluation exercises are in place to gauge their overall effectiveness. The students speak highly of the projects and are proud of their involvement. This provision is very good.

59. The huge tiled mural on the wall near the school entrance speaks of the value the school places on every student and of the place of the school in its community. Community links are very good. The school has become an outward looking school and has been very successful in building and establishing community/parent partnerships, which support students very well. The school has additional links with many other organisations, including the Safer Schools police officer and the school nurse. The school makes use of a wide variety of different community groups and outside agencies to satisfy the individual needs of the students. Developments include conflict resolution sessions, parenting courses and over 30 students attending an outward bound centre in the Lake District. Funding for many of these initiatives comes from sponsorship.

60. During the inspection the Ocean Mathematics Project was observed. Funded by the New Deal for the Community scheme, one of the objectives of the project is to raise achievement through encouraging parents and children to learn in partnership. Students and parents worked well together under the direction of the school's mathematics teachers. Translators were in attendance to resolve any language barriers and good use was made of a computer-controlled whiteboard to deliver a vibrant and exciting learning experience. This provision is very good.

61. Overall the school works well with parents. Parents are provided with a satisfactory range of information about the school. Full and informative newsletters are sent out which provide detailed information about what is happening in school. Written annual reports for parents are generally good, although the quality and depth of information given is inconsistent between teachers. Information provided by the school for parents does not fully meet statutory requirements.

62. The school works hard to involve parents and to deal with any concerns. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the majority of parents said their views were sought, and that they were comfortable about approaching the school. Individual parents have however expressed a more negative view. The school does not currently have a parent-teachers association, although this is an area for improvement identified by the school in their school improvement plan.

63. There are satisfactory procedures in place for the transfer of students from primary schools. The procedures this year are much improved and there are plans in place for these arrangements to be further enhanced should the school's application for Specialist College status be approved. The liaison with other schools and colleges for students leaving the school at the end of Year 11 is good. The school organises a university fair and arranges many opportunities for students to visit other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's very good leadership, together with strong support from the leadership team and many middle managers, makes for good leadership across the school. The management of the school's day to day life is also good. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive; governance has a number of good features and is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very well led by the headteacher: his clear vision and the ethos he has established is widely shared by the staff.
- Leadership and management provided by senior managers is good: they work well together as a team and have a high profile around the school ensuring smooth running day to day.
- There has been a distinct improvement in the quality of middle managers since the last inspection; their contribution is now good and is an important reason for rising achievement.
- There is a thorough process to check the quality of teaching and learning: self-evaluation is accurate.
- Strong leadership has changed the nature of the school making it outward looking and community focused. This has a positive impact on teaching, learning and achievement.
- The provision and use of data about the school's performance is quite thorough but is not yet being used to full effect across the school to raise student achievement.

Commentary

64. The school is effectively led. The headteacher's leadership is very good and he is very well supported by the leadership team. The clarity of his vision and aspirations for the school contribute strongly to its character. The school has been through difficult times and is now beginning to reap the rewards of persistence, focused management and hard work. A particular barrier to improvement has been the difficulty of recruiting the right teachers. Much effort has been put into finding the right staff and the situation is now much improved and as a result the teaching and learning are better. The clarity of the school's vision and ambition attracts staff in spite of its past difficulties and uninviting accommodation. There is also good leadership from senior managers and other key staff including heads of year and departments. The variable quality of middle management was an issue at the last inspection. The school gives active attention to training and coaching middle managers. As a result, middle management is now much more consistent and good overall. Support and advice from local authority staff have been beneficial in helping the school to improve. Leadership and hands-on management have established a good climate for learning which is beginning to raise standards. Also significant is the way the school is involved in a wide range of initiatives and developments while at the same time maintaining a clear sense of purpose. Its application for specialist college status in mathematics and computing is well founded.

65. The school is well managed. Routines run smoothly and procedures and policies are well documented to achieve consistency. Documentation tells a coherent story as does the strategic plan and planning for staff development. The staffing structure is rational with clear lines of accountability. There is a thorough process to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning through subject reviews. As a result, the school's self-evaluation is accurate and provides good information for further improvement. Recent moves through staff working groups to focus attention on the experience of the learner rather than the activity of the teacher are a step in the right direction. There is a strong awareness that while much has been achieved there is still much

to do. There is a great deal of data and information in the school which are becoming increasingly sophisticated but they are not used well enough across all departments to identify clearly areas for improvement and what individual students need to do to improve their achievement. Most parents and students regard the school as well run.

66. The school has a three year strategic plan which guides its work and improvement. Governors were appropriately involved in its drafting. Reviews of progress take place at whole school and departmental level but the main plan and some of the departmental plans would be improved by milestone dates on the way to completion and sharper success criteria. The recent review and updating of the school plan is a useful exercise but there is a need for an annual plan related to the strategic plan and the annual budget round.

67. The governing body carries out its work effectively and governance is good in many respects. In particular, leading governors who chair meetings and committees are very knowledgeable about the school, its successes and its shortcomings. They have strong commitment to assuring its future success. The difficult times the school has been through have strengthened the governors and made them more ready to act. The governing body is closely involved in working with the school and shares fully in helping to establish the clear vision and sense of purpose. Governors are effective in holding the school to account and provide good support to senior managers but have less involvement with departments across the school. The governing body meets most of its statutory responsibilities well but there are some issues with regard to the annual report to parents, ICT across the curriculum and collective worship that need attention. Governance is satisfactory overall.

68. Effective performance management and review for all teaching staff, including governors' review of the performance of the headteacher, takes place annually. It is closely linked to identified school priorities for teaching and learning and middle management. Similar review for non-teaching staff is not yet in place.

69. School development priorities provide a clear focus for a comprehensive programme of professional development for all staff including non-teaching staff. The school makes good use of both internal and external expertise, including innovative working parties and training days. This programme has contributed significantly to improving teaching and learning and developing the roles of middle managers and so is playing a major part in the school's efforts to raise standards and achievement. The school's involvement in the National Strategy for teaching and learning in Year 7 to 9 has had a good impact on teachers' thinking and daily teaching.

70. Induction programmes for newly qualified teachers and those seeking qualified teacher status are fully supported by a comprehensive programme of training throughout the school year. Close monitoring of teaching, regular focused seminars and in house support from line managers successfully steer teachers through their first year of teaching or towards the successful award of qualified teacher status. Teachers involved confirm that this support has been invaluable.

71. There is a commitment to inclusion in the school. The school's management of special needs is much improved since the last inspection. Staff awareness of students with special needs is good. The establishment of the Learning Support Centre through additional funding has contributed significantly to the measures the school is taking to support students who are in some way at risk. Effective leadership and management have ensured a high profile for special needs in the school, successfully establishing an inclusion panel and comprehensive systems of record keeping for students with special needs. The frequency of monitoring progress towards targets in students' individual education plans and of the support provided by subject departments is limited and the school currently lacks a named governor for special needs.

72. The school's finances are well managed by senior staff and governors. Spending is well targeted on specific needs, for example, the additional funding the school applies to supporting students at an early stage of learning English. Expenditure per student is higher than the national average, reflecting the level of disadvantage the school faces. Quality of education and achievement are satisfactory overall and good in many respects, so the school provides satisfactory

value for money. The very high balance of funds currently held is partly explained by local authority accounting practices and unexpected additional funding just before the end of the financial year. The school applies best value principles to its evaluation of its performance and to financial decision making but does not yet use the financial benchmarking information available through the Department for Education and Skills.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Total income | 5092683 | Balance from previous year | 203774 |
| Total expenditure | 4553166 | Balance carried forward to the next | 539517 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 5215 | | |

Work related learning

73. Provision for work related learning was sampled and is satisfactory. The school provides a wide variety of work-related learning opportunities for its students. The range and quality of many of the activities is good. Students benefit from the range, diversity and challenge. Arrangements for the overall leadership and management of work related learning are new and developing. They are satisfactory. Work related learning has a satisfactory impact on learning, personal development and achievement. The programme meets the needs of all students. Students gain from well-organised work experience. For those who follow the courses, there are clear work-related dimensions in Year 10 and 11 courses in business studies, business enterprise, leisure and tourism and entrepreneurship. Achievement in these courses is satisfactory. Provision is further enhanced by a very popular mentoring programme organised by the local authority in collaboration with a number of big City firms. Qualified staff from these firms come into school on a regular basis to mentor groups of students. The school works also with the Windsor Fellowship to develop students' personal skills, confidence and communication skills in a programme of thirteen sessions over a year. This programme is much appreciated by students. The school is broadening students' horizons and raising their aspirations through the Aimhigher initiative arranging visits for parents and students to universities and local colleges, engaging in the architecture and civil engineering challenge and encouraging students to attend various careers conventions.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH, MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND COMMUNITY LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test and examination results, though well below average in 2003, improved in 2004.
- Standards are below average but achievement is good overall.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Accommodation and resources vary in quality.

Commentary

74. Results in the national tests for Year 9 students have improved steadily over the last three years. Provisional results for 2004 indicate that a higher proportion of students reached the expected level than in 2003, although overall results are still below the national average. A very low proportion of students, in both years, achieved levels above those normally expected. GCSE examination results in English and English literature were well below the national average in 2003. Provisional results for 2004 show a slight improvement, but standards did not rise significantly.

75. The standard of work seen, across the year groups, is below average. A much higher proportion of students than normal join the school with relatively poor standards of English. The low standard of literacy is a barrier to achievement. Almost all students have another first language. The fact that nearly all have the same first language can undermine the development of students' English. During their time in the school, students are helped to make good progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Though most students leave the school with standards that are below average, they achieve well, given the low starting point of many. Students currently in Year 11 are already achieving better than their immediate predecessors. Year 10 students had made even more progress by the time they completed Year 9. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to others.

76. Most students respond well to their teachers, although there is a small minority whose inability to concentrate, in a few lessons, affects overall achievement. Relationships are usually good, and students support each other's learning in various ways.

77. The quality of English teaching is good throughout the school. This leads to the good achievement. The teachers bring a wide range of experience to their teaching. Their knowledge and understanding of the subject is good, and is supported by high quality learning resources, including workbooks and worksheets that cater for students of different abilities. Lessons are very well planned: teachers use pictures and charts to facilitate learning. Music is sometimes played in the background. In one lesson, students were lent a variety of musical instruments on which to play to illustrate sounds suggested by the poem being studied. The methods employed are often drawn from recent initiatives, with a strong focus on learning objectives at the start of lessons. Reviews at the end of lessons reinforce learning, although some lessons, particularly the 45 minute ones, can seem rushed, with insufficient time for teachers to do justice to all they have prepared. There is a healthy emphasis on group work – healthy because it provides more opportunity for the development of speaking and listening skills. Students are taught in mixed ability classes, and this enables them to support each other in grouped tasks. In lessons where a support teacher is

present, it is possible to form ability groups, and to give direct support to the lower attaining students. English staff work closely with colleagues supporting students with special educational needs and students at an early stage of learning English. There is much to be said for the partnership lessons that are made possible by having another teacher and not just an assistant present. However, resources are stretched by this strategy.

Example of outstanding practice

A poetry lesson which held the interest and fired the enthusiasm of underachieving students in Year 11

A small group of under-achieving Year 11 students were seen being taught in the library. A short activity on poetic devices immediately engaged their attention, and they were soon responding to Seamus Heaney's poem 'Digging'. The starter activity helped them to respond to the poem's language. They were also helped by the excellent resources available, including a visual interpretation of the poem by another teacher. The class teacher continued to hold their attention with his own detailed knowledge and understanding of the text and its background, and through his engaging and sympathetic manner. It was a joy to see these boys, one of them with special educational needs, getting to grips with a GCSE poem and deriving real pleasure from the task. The library itself was used as a resource: before the lesson ended, they had used books and the internet to find out more about Heaney, and had acquired some useful notes. The teacher's excellent planning and management of the lesson meant that these students, with well below average standards, had achieved very well on this part of the syllabus.

78. Written work is marked thoroughly, and students are given every encouragement to improve on their work. They have clear targets, and are made very aware of what level they are working at or what grade they have achieved. They use ICT to redraft written work, such as GCSE coursework, but computers are not used widely in lessons.

79. The subject makes a good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students face questions about mortality, human rights, moral and social dilemmas, and the beliefs of others, as well as being given greater insight into the culture of this and other lands. Citizenship issues are addressed, for example in work on homelessness that arises out of the study of texts such as Robert Swindells' 'Stone Cold'. English also makes a significant contribution to the extra-curricular life of the school through after school clubs that include creative writing, productions, and highly successful participation in debates and public speaking.

80. English is well led and managed by two teachers sharing the post of head of department. The arrangement works well, bringing different styles to the task and enabling more monitoring of teaching and learning to take place. There is a sense of direction and a shared vision. Self evaluation is a strength of this faculty. There are opportunities for teachers to observe each other at work as well as for middle managers to monitor lessons. Data gathering and analysis lead not only to better target setting for individual students but also to changes in teaching strategies where evidence indicates that this is desirable. The amount of detailed planning that has been done is very impressive – not just detailed schemes of work but also imaginative learning resources. Teachers work from similar lesson plans, maximising the use of these resources. There is still some unevenness in the quality of teaching and learning, as seen in lessons and in the marking of work, but there is good capacity for further improvement in quality of teaching and standards. The heads of faculty are quite new to their posts, but have started well.

81. The quality of the accommodation for English is adequate overall. The department has been able to cope with several rooms that are due for refurbishment or replacement. Learning resources need improving, notwithstanding the interactive whiteboard in one of the refurbished rooms and good access to the library. Special funding from the New Deal for the Community scheme has allowed an extra teacher to be employed to work with underachieving students; this improves the overall provision. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Good subject leadership has begun to have an impact and standards are beginning to rise.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

82. Standards of literacy are below average in all year groups and overall provision for literacy is just satisfactory. Most students join the school with a considerable literacy deficit, although some are competent users of English and many become quite proficient by the time they leave the school. Students go on to university, including Oxford and Cambridge, so generalisations can be misleading. Significant numbers, however, have difficulties with reading and writing, activities which dominate schooling. Speaking and listening skills are not easily acquired, even though they are vital to adequate learning, because of the relatively low value placed on discussion work by many students. The fact that almost every student has English as an additional language means that many have difficulty in making the best use of the curriculum opportunities the school provides. The school is aware of the problems students face, and senior managers take provision for literacy very seriously.

83. Although the school was used as a pilot for the national strategy on literacy, the initial approach was not particularly successful, and changes have been made. There is now an emphasis on talk, with the use of English being required except where students would clearly benefit from an explanation in their mother tongue. The literacy co-ordinator has good support from the local authority and other external services. There is no specific staff group to manage literacy, but the co-ordinator has significant input into other working groups – such as that on school improvement. The school is committed to a scheme that involves parents as ‘homework partners’, for instance in reading. Older students also help younger ones. There have been summer schools for pupils moving from Year 6, although the take up was disappointing last year. Students arriving with English levels below those normally expected at the end of Year 6 have benefited from targeted work on English progress units during Year 7.

84. The school strategy is for literacy development to be part of the work in all subject areas. The evidence so far is that this is not yet happening in a consistent way. There is good provision in physical education and design and technology. English teaching makes a significant contribution. In some subjects, such as science, the literacy strategy is there in the policy documents and schemes of work but is less evident in short term planning or in practice in lessons. Some subjects stress key words, but not all provide help with how to write for particular purposes or audiences. Some subjects – notably business studies – appear to have no written policy yet. More encouragingly, there have been some good contributions to literacy in the extra-curricular life of the school: in creative writing, the Carnegie reviews, and some excellent opportunities for speaking and listening – whether in school productions or in public speaking and debates. Success in inter-school competitions has raised the profile of formal speaking skills, and this is beginning to be transferred to speaking in lessons. But English as a medium for discussion, or just as the means by which people communicate and ask each other to do things, does not come easily to most students and much remains to be done. The co-ordinator’s role in monitoring the quality of the provision is key to this. Although there is a desire for the literacy strategy to run through all planning, training and classroom practice, and the documentation is impressive, the reality is that a consistent approach to literacy is not yet being fully realised.

Modern Foreign Languages

The focus of the inspection was French. **Spanish** is taken by a minority of students in Year 8 and 9 as an alternative to French. One Year 8 lesson was seen in which teaching and learning were good. Students are enjoying the language and are making reasonably good progress after a few weeks of study.

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are mostly good.
- The modern languages faculty is well led and managed.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.
- Teaching time is low.

Commentary

85. French is taught to all students in Years 7 to 9 with the exception of one Year 8 group learning Spanish. Languages are an optional subject from Year 10. Overall, standards in French are below the national average, but improving. By the end of Year 9, students have covered a substantial amount of grammar, including using past and future tenses, possessive adjectives and object pronouns. By Year 11, most students have made sufficient progress to achieve a modest grade at GCSE in French. However, they lack accuracy in written work and some lack confidence when speaking. Comprehension skills are more secure. Students' achievement is satisfactory when considering their low starting points and weak literacy levels on entry.

86. Higher attaining students are often provided with extension tasks in lessons and generally achieve the standards of which they are capable. Students with special educational needs receive no additional support in language lessons, but are provided with some modified worksheets. Their progress and achievement are satisfactory. Students in the early stages of learning English also receive no extra support, but generally have language acquisition skills which serve them well when learning French. Their achievement is in line with others at the school.

87. Teaching and learning are mainly good and enable students to make satisfactory progress. Lessons usually have a brisk pace and there are many opportunities for reinforcing the spoken language through repetition. Students enjoy speaking the language even if it just involves repeating in chorus. Teachers often break down the language into manageable chunks to enable students to repeat phrases in sections. One teacher uses comic images to good effect in helping students remember particular pronunciations. Students have positive attitudes to learning and respond well to teachers' comments on their work and rewards given in class. They engage enthusiastically in pair-work and, in a very good Year 9 lesson, showed skill in exchanging roles with a partner.

88. The languages faculty is well led and managed by an accomplished linguist who has done well to maintain the quality of provision through the school's troubled past. Leadership and management are now good. The decision to choose a modular course in Years 10 and 11 is wise as it enables students to accumulate marks towards their GCSE in stages, rather than relying on final examinations. This builds much-needed confidence.

89. Improvements since the previous inspection have been satisfactory, although there are areas for improvement. The rooms in which languages are taught are poorly maintained and equipped compared to other areas of the school. There are insufficient textbooks to allow students to take a copy home and refer to during homework. Teaching time, especially in Years 7 and 8, is low and barely adequate to meet the course requirements. Students do not have regular regular access to native speakers to improve their confidence and overall accuracy.

Community languages

Bengali was the focus of the inspection. **Arabic** was sampled. In the one Year 11 Arabic lesson observed most students showed enthusiasm for the subject and a few higher attaining students performed very well in their tasks. Students were well guided by a teacher with good expertise in the subject and good awareness of each student's ability. There was a variety of well planned activities. Some lower attaining students were slightly self-conscious at the beginning of the lesson but gained in confidence the lesson progressed. Students learn new aspects of language with ease through enjoyment of simple games and use of visual materials. Good relationships clearly reinforce learning. Students work hard and want to do well.

Bengali

Provision in Bengali is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students make good progress and achieve well; achievement by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is good.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Assessment procedures are good.
- There is insufficient use of dictionaries to promote learning of spellings and 'standard Bengali'.
- ICT is not used well enough to enhance students' learning and study skills.

Commentary

90. Bengali is taught in Years 8 -11. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students gaining both A*-C and A*-G grades, greatly improved compared to the previous year's results. Students with special educational needs are suitably supported in lessons and achieve standards in line with their capabilities. This represents a positive picture and considerable improvement since the last inspection.

91. Standards are above average in Years 8 and 9 and achievement is good. Students of all abilities cope well in activities created and controlled by the teachers. When required to speak spontaneously or to write independently students show confidence in their use of language. They are able to apply their knowledge in new situations because the teachers give them enough opportunities to consolidate their understanding before beginning new work. In most lessons the tasks are well matched to students' abilities. Teachers prepare their own resources and mark students' work in a way that helps them improve it further using levels, appropriate grades and sometimes diagnostic comments.

92. Standards are above average in Years 10 and 11 and the achievement of students is good. Teachers extend opportunities and give very good encouragement to students to converse and speak audibly and at length in discussions. Students' work shows that most students acquire good competence in reading and writing in Bengali by the end of Year 11. Most students show developing fluency and good standards of handwriting and presentation. Students apply simple grammatical rules carefully and understand the use of different tenses and expressions. However, teachers do not sufficiently encourage students to use dictionaries to support their own learning and correction of spellings.

93. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have high expectations. They provide a variety of activities that hold students' interest and attention. In almost all lessons there is an opportunity to listen to Bengali very clearly recorded on the audio tapes and this improves students' listening skills and the ability to follow instructions and complete tasks. A generally lively pace generates a willingness to participate. Students use a range of appropriate vocabulary relating to topics such as 'shopping'. Most higher attaining students begin to write for different purposes, for example, writing a letter or a short story to extend their skills. Relationships between teacher and students are mostly good. Students show appropriate respect for teachers' exposition and behave well in most lessons. The secure subject knowledge of teachers and well planned lessons have a good impact on students' learning. There are good assessment procedures that also help in setting individual targets of improvement for students. All students are given appropriate targets and action points in their exercise books. Students' learning is supported and extended through regular homework. Students learn less well when the teacher leads from the front, stays close to the writing board and has a limited range of strategies to manage students' behaviour. ICT is not used enough to enhance students' study and word processing skills in Bengali.

94. The leadership of the subject is good. The subject leader is well organised and aware of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. There has been good improvement since the subject was last inspected in detail.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good subject leadership is focused on raising standards.
- There is very good provision for enhancing achievement outside lessons.
- Good relationships between students and teachers are helping to raise standards.
- Students' target grades are not being fully used to raise standards.
- The good subject knowledge of teachers is helping to raise levels of achievement.

Commentary

95. GCSE results for Year 11 in 2003 were below average compared with schools nationally. The GCSE results rose between 2000 and 2002 but dipped in 2003. They recovered in 2004 and maintained the upward trend. Test results at the end of Year 9 have risen over the last five years. In 2003 they were below the national average but the gap between school and national figures is rapidly closing. These results are clearly above those of schools that have a similar intake.

96. During the inspection, the overall standard of work seen in all years was average. As students start school with below average standards, this represents good achievement. Progress over time can be seen in that Year 9 students in a high set can solve simultaneous linear equations graphically while their counterparts in Year 11 can extend the topic to involve straight lines which intercept circles.

97. Teaching is good overall. In the lessons seen the teaching varied from very good to unsatisfactory. In the very good lessons students learned well because the teacher ensured they were actively and practically involved and there was a good range of learning strategies. Common strengths in the teaching include the stating of learning objectives at the start of the lesson and reviewing progress against them at the end. In the less successful lessons some students lost interest for significant periods of time because the work was too easy.

98. An assessment system has been developed which is linked to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. This is good but is still in its infancy and is not yet having an impact on learning. In the better lessons good use was made of resources, such as interactive whiteboards and graphical calculators, so that all students got involved in learning. A good example of this was seen in a Year 9 class where students used arithmetic methods to solve trinomial equations. This active involvement in discovering the mathematics meant that students learnt better.

99. Students generally behave well and work hard. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. The students have confidence in their teachers and there is mutual respect. This results in a pleasant ambience within the classrooms and students feeling confident to tackle difficult questions without fear of ridicule if they make mistakes.

100. Attendance at the mathematics clubs is very good. The work undertaken at these meetings is relevant to the students and is raising levels of achievement. Teachers give up their time to organise the clubs and encourage students to attend. The more able students in Year 11 have the opportunity to attend evening lessons at the local tertiary college to study mathematics to Advanced Supplementary level. This provision is very good as it increases awareness of the subject and raises student aspirations.

101. Mathematics lessons are taught in temporary classrooms sited on the playground and on the sixth and seventh floor of the main building. The geographical positioning of these classes means that students are often late to lessons. Some lessons lack challenge because the teacher keeps rigidly to the lesson plan without allowing for the reduced time so that delivery of important concepts is sometimes rushed.

102. Leadership and management are good. The teachers work well as a team and are mutually supportive. They meet regularly both formally and informally to discuss how to improve achievement. Lessons are monitored and evaluated, however the frequency of these observations is restricted by the distance between some of the classrooms.

103. Various strategies have been used to improve standards in the school. For instance the student groupings have been reviewed to give two parallel top sets. This has provided the students involved with fresh impetus and is working well.

104. Examination results at GCSE have followed an upward trend, and those at the end of Year 9 have continued to rise. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

105. Since the last inspection all teachers have been trained in the use and development of mathematics across the curriculum. Provision overall is satisfactory. At present, there are few examples of the students being asked to use their mathematical skills in the wider context. In science, Year 11 students successfully sketched graphs to illustrate the outcomes of an experiment. In design technology, students were encouraged to use geometric shapes in their designs and to apply their knowledge of pattern and tessellation. In a Year 7 French lesson students had to perform mental arithmetic tasks and answer in the target language.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' relationships with students help develop a very positive attitude to learning which has a definite impact on attainment.
- There is a drive in the whole department to raise standards through frequent reference in lessons to how students should communicate scientifically in tests and examinations.
- The approach to lesson planning is not focused enough on how students should learn.
- Teachers do not make enough use of assessment data to plan for the different needs of students.
- This is an innovative department constantly striving to find effective improvement strategies.

Commentary

106. In 2003 the national test results for Year 9 were well below average. However, given the low starting points of many students, achievement is satisfactory overall compared with schools in similar circumstances. Results improved in 2004. At the end of Year 11 GCSE results follow a similar pattern: well below the national average but satisfactory when compared to schools in similar circumstances. There was an improvement from 2003 to 2004. Current achievement is satisfactory by Year 11. Overall standards of written work are often below those expected for students' ages, but standards achieved in lessons clearly rise when the teaching is challenging.

107. Teaching is satisfactory overall with almost half of the lessons being good or very good. It is better in Years 9 and 10 than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers usually set appropriate tasks but they tend to be the same tasks for all students. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and this makes a significant contribution to the atmosphere in the lessons. This building up of good relations

between teachers and students has been as a result of a conscious effort of the staff. Though overall standards are below average, there is a significant number of higher attaining students and they are being challenged by the content of lessons. However, there is not enough emphasis on encouraging students to analyse and think about scientific ideas. Some teachers do not make enough use of the data about students' progress and targets to plan activities for students of different ability.

108. Where lessons are well planned and there is pace and challenge, students are more interested in their work and attain better. This was illustrated in a Year 11 class studying the path of light through a glass block. Because the students spent much of the time thinking about the causes of refraction and its everyday effects and only the minimum amount of time doing the mechanics of the practical, their learning was good. In contrast, in a Year 8 lesson students could reliably record the data about temperature changes but the pace of the lesson was much slower and the different needs of students were not accounted for in the planning so that interest waned. In a Year 7 lesson on food chains and food webs, the teacher spent much of the time dealing with material which the students had previously studied at primary school and very little time on developing appropriate ideas for the age group.

109. The initiatives on which the department is working are beginning to provide a more active and challenging science experience for the students as in a very good Year 9 lesson about the weathering of rocks. The students had to recap relevant ideas about pH and acidity from a previous lesson and apply this to the topic of rocks. The teacher used a wide range of strategies to involve the students, allowing them to demonstrate what they understood and could accomplish. In another very good lesson in Year 11, the students worked collaboratively in order to produce presentations for the whole class on the digestive system. This group demonstrated very high attainment with some very challenging work on the prediction and interpretation of enzyme activity graphs.

110. The science department recognises that literacy is an issue for the whole school and is placing emphasis on correct scientific communication. This is important but the range of strategies which promote literacy skills is not wide enough. A Year 8 group developed their speaking skills with emphasis on learning and reinforcing the correct scientific terminology. In addition to the literacy development, the teacher also used the students to model the concept of individual cells combining to produce tissue and then organs. This activity supported their understanding.

111. The head of science provides good leadership and management. The needs of the department have been analysed and planning shows vision. There are new systems and strategies to move the department forward but these are not yet fully established. There is not enough sharing of good features of lessons amongst teachers. This is a very hard working department that has been through some difficult times. The teachers are fully committed to raising standards but they are handicapped in part by the lack of technician support which is having a negative impact on the department's drive to develop investigative skills.

112. Standards since the last inspection have improved. There has been a significant improvement in the overall quality of teaching and the use of assessment data, but the department is aware there is still much to be done. Overall, improvement is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning leads to good achievement.
- Good management and leadership provide a strong basis for teaching and learning.
- Good resources and accommodation improve learning opportunities.
- There are continuing weaknesses in addressing the literacy needs of the younger students.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop their use of ICT in most subjects.

Commentary

113. Teacher assessment data for Year 9 and sampling of students' work show that standards are average and have improved steadily over the last three years. Standards in Year 11, for GCSE ICT are above average in 2004. This is better than in 2003 and compares well with results for 2002. GCSE results for 2004 are better than for most other subjects and represent an improvement since the last inspection.

114. Students enter the school in Year 7 with a range of experiences in ICT and by the time they are in Year 9 their achievement is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English make similar progress to other students. Students work confidently with presentation software and spreadsheets and are able to design a web page. Not enough attention is given to literacy and the National Curriculum areas of control and sensing are not taught. For students in Years 10 and 11, achievement is good and they can confidently design a school brochure, create a table for data types in a word processor and understand the term 'normalisation'.

115. Teaching and learning are mostly good. This is as a result of very good planning and organisation that ensures good learning opportunities. Lessons start promptly with learning objectives and procedures are made clear. The accommodation is very good but the poor ventilation makes the rooms very hot in warm weather. The computers and software are good and make a strong contribution to the students' learning. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards. The structure and resources from the National Strategy for teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are used well and this is having a positive influence on learning and achievement. In the best lessons, teachers present the topics in a lively and enthusiastic manner that readily engages the students and promotes good learning. In lessons where there are shortcomings, teachers focus too much on delivering the lesson instead of what students should be learning.

116. Leadership and management are good. There is a well thought out development plan that sets targets based on improving standards and with outcomes that are easily identified. There is an effective monitoring system that is contributing to the improvement in teaching and learning. Technical support is good and makes a strong contribution to students' learning opportunities. Good progress has been made in resolving issues raised in the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

117. Overall the use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The coverage of sensing and control is weak. Students do not have enough opportunity to use and develop their skills in other subjects. There is good use of ICT in business education, media studies, music and PE. The use of ICT is unsatisfactory in art, design and technology and science; all of which would be expected to make a significant contribution to students' capability in ICT. It is also unsatisfactory in foreign and community languages.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in geography are rising.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- There is a determined effort to provide fieldwork for all students.
- The number of students taking geography in Years 10 and 11 is increasing.
- Standards are still below national averages.

- The department relies too much on non-specialist teaching and accommodation.

Commentary

118. Standards achieved by students at the end of Years 9 and 11 are rising. Over the past three years there has been a steady improvement in the number of students being awarded grades A* to C in GCSE examinations and the number of those reaching Level 5 of the National Curriculum. Standards, however, remain below those expected nationally, particularly in Years 7 to 9, partly because many students start at the school with low levels of attainment in geography and gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Also, much of the teaching in Years 7 to 9 is by teachers who are not specialist geographers and takes place in non-specialist accommodation.

119. Achievement is satisfactory as students make progress from low standards to ones closer to national expectations by the end of years 9 and 11. Rising results in GCSE examinations indicate that students are making progress in geographical knowledge and understanding as they proceed through the school.

120. These improvements are partly the result of teaching that is satisfactory overall and often good. Lesson planning is good and includes a variety of tasks to involve students in learning and to ensure that learning is reinforced at the end of each lesson. This was particularly the case in lessons on sources of water for Las Vegas and a debate on the use of non-renewable sources of energy. Imaginative lesson material enthused students, focused discussion and enabled them to reach accurate geographical conclusions and promoted learning. Lessons are well timed and the pace is brisk. Good support is given to students with special needs who make appropriate progress as a result. Other strong features which have a positive impact on learning and achievement are field study for all students, good support for external examination coursework and an increasing use of ICT. As a result students concentrate well, are encouraged by effective measures to celebrate good work and learn by working together and sharing their views with others in the classroom. Teaching is most effective in GCSE groups. In Years 7 to 9 teaching by non-specialists is less confident and learning, though satisfactory, is less effective. Exercise books reveal a lack of detail and examples in students' work as consequence.

121. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Administrative procedures are effective and support is good. Regular assessment of students' work which includes the use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades is a feature in charting progress. There is effective monitoring of the work of teachers in the department, of students' work in exercise books and a comprehensive handbook that guides the work of the department on a daily basis. Resources for learning are good and the two specialist geography rooms contain attractive displays that create a good climate for learning. These developments have contributed significantly to the raising of standards and the improvement of the overall quality of teaching. Schemes of work, however, are limited and lack the identification of opportunities to contribute to the wider development of students through citizenship, work related learning, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and ICT.

122. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Rising standards, improved management and teaching quality and more student-centred approaches are features of this improvement. Standards however, remain below those expected nationally and the reliance on non-specialist teachers and rooms remains a concern.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 is well above average.
- There is good use of a variety of learning styles and a range of teaching resources.
- Classroom management is inconsistent and sometimes unsatisfactory, reflecting the different levels of experience of the teachers.
- There is limited use of ICT to help students learn.
- Development of local fieldwork and research is too limited, especially in lower years.
- There is good reinforcement of specific subject vocabulary in lessons.

Commentary

123. Standards are well below average on entry but by the end of Year 9 they rise and attainment is at the national average. GCSE results are usually above the national average and were good in 2004. A high proportion of students achieve the highest grades (A*/A). This is evidence of very effective preparation for examinations. Standards currently seen in lessons and in students' work are broadly average, often reflecting limited literacy skills. Standards improve as students progress up the school. This improvement means that achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and by Year 11. There are opportunities provided to enable individual students to attain at higher levels as tasks are often open-ended and there is effective structuring of work to allow students with special educational needs to achieve well.

124. Teaching overall is satisfactory but is more effective and good in Years 10 and 11. In these years teachers are more experienced and students more motivated and willing to discuss complex issues. Students learn well. There is a good development of historical skills, especially the analysis of evidence sources and cause and effect relationships, as in a discussion of the reasons for the rise of the Nazis in pre-war Germany in a Year 11 lesson. Much of the work is in a visual form, such as the analysis of cartoons in Year 10 to identify attitudes towards the League of Nations. All the teachers have good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for the subject. The most effective teaching has pace and challenge which combine to engage students' interest, such as the comparison of the use of portraits for propaganda purposes in Year 8. In Years 7 to 9 learning is satisfactory because teachers carefully plan lessons to structure the work into small varied chunks that can be easily absorbed and then use these as foundations for further learning experiences. The National Strategy for teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 has a clear impact on classroom practices with a stress on raising knowledge of subject vocabulary. Students can empathise with a variety of historical situations, for example, students in Year 8 have a good understanding of life in Gin Lane in 1750 as a result of careful linkage to current social problems.

125. Teaching is less effective where teachers dominate lessons, or classroom management is poor, with little opportunity for individual initiative or independent work. Some lessons move too slowly and do not challenge students because they do not acquire a sense of the timing of events. Homework tasks are not challenging enough or set regularly enough. Local fieldwork is not developed enough to make the best use of students' numeracy, research and enquiry skills in the lower school. Little use is made of ICT to support learning although recently installed interactive whiteboards have the potential to improve this.

126. Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good in Year 10 and 11 but are more variable in Years 7 to 9, especially in Year 8. In the majority of classes students are interested in the subject and are keen to learn. This is reinforced by encouragement and praise from the teachers. Where classroom management is poor, often due to inexperienced teaching staff or because lessons lack pace and challenge, students become restless and behaviour deteriorates.

127. Leadership in history is unsatisfactory as there is currently no head of department but the head of humanities is working hard to develop the basic systems and documentation needed to raise standards and ensure consistency between members of the department. Staff in the department are relatively inexperienced. Management is satisfactory. The department effectively assesses and tracks students' progress and this is used to set individual targets in terms of National Curriculum levels and to inform the planning of learning based on tasks designed to meet the different needs of students. Since the last inspection results have risen and the level and variety of resources used in teaching have improved. Marking has become more consistent and targets are now regularly set for individual students. There is much better planning of provision for less able students. Overall improvement is satisfactory but there is a lack of leadership and basic documentation to guide the work of the department.

Religious education

Provision in religious education (RE) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well led and the teaching is well organised.
- Students generally do better in GCSE RE than in most other subjects and are well prepared for examinations.
- The time allocation is relatively low.
- Some large teaching groups restrict students' learning.

Commentary

128. Standards in RE are below those typically found in Years 9 and 11 but students' achievement is satisfactory overall and shows continuing improvement. Students achieved an average of one grade higher in RE compared with other subjects taken by them in GCSE in 2004. This is mainly due to a well organised programme of learning and careful preparation for the examination.

129. Students in Years 7 to 9 learn about three major world faiths, including Islam and Christianity, and complete a project. Their prior knowledge of religions varies considerably, but students generally have a greater understanding of Islam than other faiths, as nearly all students are practising Muslims. Low levels of literacy affect their ability to read and write with confidence and accuracy. The projects undertaken by Year 9 provide good opportunities for independent learning and use of information and communication technology, for example, by doing research on the Internet. By Year 11, many students, especially those capable of higher attainment, are able to write in some depth about Islamic beliefs and key figures such as prophets.

130. Teaching is satisfactory overall and has some good features. The good features include teachers' good subject knowledge and effective use of resources such as television, interactive whiteboard and worksheets aimed at various levels of ability. In the better lessons relationships between teachers and students are good and lessons move at a strong pace. Students learn well where these features are in evidence. In a good Year 9 lesson on the Five Pillars of Islam, students were helped to distinguish between describing what Muslims do in their practice and explaining what they hope to achieve by such practice. This was assisted by good quality worksheets containing different amounts and types of information according to the capabilities of particular students. In this way, students with special educational needs and those at early stages of learning English were well supported and achieved the lesson's objectives. Assessment of progress is very thorough and students are allocated levels and set targets every term.

131. However, some lessons were less effective because the teacher was providing answers to questions without checking whether some students might already know. In others, activities were not set up well and lacked sufficient focus, for example, in a Year 8 lesson where the teacher attempted to initiate a brief meditation with the class but did not prepare them adequately by

explaining what was expected. As a consequence students' minds were not focused and they became easily distracted.

132. RE is well led and managed by an experienced teacher. The programme of work follows the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, but the school does not allocate the recommended amount of teaching time to it. In Years 10 and 11, RE is taught in tutor groups which tend to be larger than the teaching groups in other core curriculum subjects. These factors have the combined effect of restricting the pace of progress made by students. Despite this, students generally do well in RE and improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to students achieving well.
- The quality of assessment and monitoring of students progress and attainment are good.
- When compared to national standards at the end of year 9 and Year 11 standards achieved by students are below average.
- The quality of accommodation and level of resources are poor.

Commentary

133. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessment shows that students' overall standards are well below the national average in 2004. In the 2003 GCSE examinations results were well below the national average overall. The GCSE results for 2004 show that standards are low but there has been an improvement over the previous year. The school has had difficulty in appointing suitably qualified staff during recent years and this has affected the standards achieved.

134. Work seen during the inspection confirmed that standards are improving. The students in Years 7 to 9 students are making good progress. Standards are average but achievement is good because of the progress they make from a low starting point. Students produce articles of satisfactory quality and they are developing skills to express their ideas and communicate their designs. The improvements in standards and progress are due to suitably qualified teachers being appointed and the use of the National Strategy for teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 to improve planning and teaching.

135. Students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is below the standard expected nationally. Their achievement is satisfactory when their low level of attainment at the end of Year 9 is taken into account. Higher attaining students are capable of high quality work, as can be seen, for example, in the detailed and well presented project folders, and the good quality practical project work. In general, students make limited use of computers and there is no evidence of computer aided design and manufacture. Students are challenged to focus clearly on the requirements of the GCSE examination. As a result, students understand what they need to do and are helped to reach higher grades. The improvements seen are a result of better planning of lessons, higher expectations and high quality assessment.

136. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' use their good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and high expectations to engage students. Effective classroom management is based on good relationships. The good range of activities ensures that all students are actively involved in their learning. Lessons are sharply focused and the objectives are shared sufficiently with the students. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and new knowledge is introduced as and when it is needed, so that students use it immediately to develop their understanding. In a Year 8 lesson there was good use of explanation and demonstration of how to draw geometric shapes so that

students could use the information to influence their own designs. Teachers make good use of their expertise in illustration and animation techniques to help students to realise their designs in Year 11 classes. Teachers work well with students with special educational needs and English as an additional language, helping these students to progress well. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers provide encouraging, motivating comments that show students how to improve. These assessment outcomes are used consistently and effectively to adapt future planning and teaching

137. The head of faculty and head of department provide good leadership. Management of the faculty is good. The head of faculty and head of department have rightly focused on lesson planning to improve teaching, the use of assessment and the tracking and monitoring of student progress and attainment to help raise standards. Systems for assessment and monitoring of students' progress and attainment are well developed and are good. Information from assessment is used to set targets. The poor condition of the accommodation and the current lack of resources is a barrier to further progress and restricts the range of curriculum opportunities, particularly the use of ICT. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus of the inspection was on art and music but **media studies** was sampled. Two lessons were seen. Students make the progress one would expect, given the standard of their literacy. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features and this leads to satisfactory achievement. GCSE results for 2003 were below average, with similar results being achieved in 2004. There are no specialist rooms for media studies and access to resources, including ICT, is limited, but the English teachers who staff the subject bring enthusiasm and good subject knowledge to their task.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make very good progress from Year 7 to Year 9.
- Teachers are well informed and possess good subject knowledge.
- Students' attainment in the GCSE examination in art and design in 2003 was higher than in their other subjects.
- The provision of ICT in the art department is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

138. Attainment at the beginning of Year 7 is well below national expectations. Many students enter the school with very weak drawing and painting skills, and with little knowledge and poor understanding of art and design. They make good progress in Year 7 and their drawing improves. In Year 8 skills develop further. By the end of Year 9 there is a further significant improvement so that the standard of their artwork is in line with national expectations. Students have acquired the necessary range of art, craft and design skills. Achievement from the start of Year 7 to Year 9 is very good.

139. In the 2003 GCSE Examination in art and design, the number of students achieving grades A*-C was in line with the national average. These students performed better in art and design than in their other GCSE subjects. There was some decline in standards in the 2004 examination. Some of the Year 10 constructions in three dimensions are of a reasonable standard. Students lack some basic skills, but they are developing much better understanding of art and design through investigation of the work of post-impressionist painters such as Van Gogh. It is really only in Year 11 that students begin to display any capacity for working independently. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, comparable with that of other students. Achievement during Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.

140. Teaching is good overall and leads to good learning. Most students settle very readily to tasks because teachers set clear objectives and students know what they must do. Students enjoy the work. Teachers are well informed, possess good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly. Management of time and available resources is good and teachers expect students to work to the best of their abilities. However, homework is not set and marked on a regular basis. The pace of some lessons is rather slow, more particularly in Years 10 and 11, which has an adverse impact on students' learning. Good use is made of the learning assistant who provides support for students with special educational needs.

141. Leadership is good and management are satisfactory. The fairly new head of department is making every effort to improve and up-grade many of the systems and procedures that he has inherited. Much has been done to raise student expectations, especially in Years 7 to 9, and the profile of art in the school. The complexities of the proposed move of the art department to the building that contains the design and technology department have also hampered forward planning. The head of department is a good role model for both students and staff. Assessing, recording and tracking systems are in place, but they lack rigour, which has an adverse affect on target setting for individual students.

142. Accommodation is poor. The art studios are badly in need of refurbishment and do not provide a working environment that is conducive to learning. Resources are satisfactory, within the context of a traditional curriculum, but the provision of computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers within the art department is unsatisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Students' knowledge of other artists has improved and teaching is now good overall. Students' attitudes to the subject have also improved.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and leads to good achievement.
- All teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Information and communications technology is used effectively to support students' progress.
- A good variety of music from different cultures is introduced.
- The use of assessment information in planning and monitoring music provision is not fully developed.
- Systematic planning for future developments is not clearly defined.
- Extra-curricular and instrumental provision to provide extended learning opportunities for students is limited.

Commentary

143. At the beginning of Year 7 a majority of students have well below average standards and few or no instrumental skills. Although standards are lower than national standards, in relation to prior attainment students achieve well throughout the school. The department has reintroduced an examination course for students in Year 10. There is no course running in Year 11 at present.

144. Students play confidently at the keyboards and are making good progress in relating notation to the technical demands of the playing. Attention is given to correct fingering and as a consequence some students are able to perform well. Students are beginning to play with attention to dynamics and phrasing. Many have a strong sense of pulse and rhythm and are using information and communication technology to change, combine and refine sounds and compositions to the expected level. Students have positive attitudes to music, they are attentive and work well together in groups and pairs. As a result of the specialized level of support available, students of all

abilities, including those who have special educational needs or are at an early stage of learning English, achieve well.

145. The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes very good, and students learn well. Lessons are enhanced by effective student-teacher partnerships. There is a strong sense of mutual respect between teachers, support staff and students. Teachers have used their excellent command of the subject as practising musicians to draw up a scheme of work and to arrange and compose works to match the needs of students of all abilities. Lessons are effectively structured and often have a well planned opening to focus students' attention. Management of students is good, there are clear routines in place and opportunities for students to reflect on pieces of music are often provided. Good collaborative group work enables a positive contribution to be made to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In all lessons observed, teachers' subject knowledge and musical competence was exemplary.

146. Leadership and management are good with a strong determination to raise standards in the subject. Assessment is at an early stage of development. There is a clear system for tracking the progress of students and there are opportunities for students to evaluate their achievements. However, use of assessment information in planning and to monitor provision in the department is not well developed.

147. The department has come through a difficult period with instability in staffing, now resolved, and temporary accommodation which provides little space for practical music making. Good progress has been made in most areas. Overall standards of attainment have risen, provision of resources has improved and the quality of teaching is consistently good. Although there are planned improvements to the accommodation, extra-curricular and instrumental provision, the current provision constrains the effect these important elements could have on helping to raise standards in music throughout the school and especially at GCSE level.

148. Whilst there is a clear understanding of what further developments are needed, these have yet to be systematically planned for. The hard work of the current head of department and his specialist support staff have clearly made significant improvements, however, the department needs to ensure its work is guided by a departmental development plan so that music is clearly aligned with other policies and procedures operating within the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching, particularly the teaching of evaluation and feedback skills, mean that students learn very well.
- There are many opportunities for personal development given to students, especially in outdoor and adventurous activities.
- There is a very positive ethos in the department, which values students and their contribution; as a result students respond well.
- Provision for extra curricular sport is outstanding, and the school has many successes in matches and competitions.
- Strategic planning for development in the department does not focus sharply enough on improving achievement.
- Because of the limited accommodation there are very good partnerships with other providers, which enhance the curriculum and give additional opportunities to students.

Commentary

149. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11 students reach the standards expected nationally. This represents good achievement between Year 7 and Year 9, because students improve their skills significantly, learn how to analyse work they see and suggest ways to improve it. They become more confident in linking their skills together to achieve success, for example when tactically playing games. Although GCSE results are below the national average, many who take the course gain a better grade than in other subjects and therefore achieve well. Higher attainers achieve very well in GCSE, performing efficiently, making good decisions and leading others. Though a minority of each year group, these students contribute well to core PE lessons, setting a standard to which others aspire. For students who do not follow a GCSE course, achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory as they develop more advanced skills and decision making capability. Because the school accommodation cannot provide a sufficient range of activities to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, some lesson time is spent travelling to offsite facilities which reduces the time needed to develop students' skills more highly.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 8 mixed ability group in an outdoor and adventurous activity lesson on problem solving is skillfully managed to challenge students to work co-operatively in the pursuit of high standards.

The students were working on adventurous physical group challenges using gymnastic equipment to mimic electrified fences or a contaminated swamp. A lively starter activity, in which pupils talked together to reconstruct a diagram of the key features of working safely on the challenges, was skilfully managed. It helped students work well together and allowed the teacher to assess their understanding and therefore to target support as the lesson progressed. Following a well organised warm up, partly led by students, the problems themselves were introduced. The teacher's questioning was expertly targeted to get students thinking about how their group would solve the problem. This was challenging. It made them evaluate, for example, the relative strength or agility of individuals and how these could best be used to achieve a positive outcome for the group. This process led to thorough analysis of the problems and all groups made a really good effort to prepare a strategy. The teacher gave support where needed and the pace of work was rapid. Students demonstrated remarkable understanding of risk assessment as they accounted for potential risks in their plans. The teacher's expectation that all would work hard, together with impressive support by students for their fellow students, made for an extremely worthwhile learning experience for all. Even when plans were less successful, the teaching ensured that students reflected, modified plans and tried again. There was throughout a genuine excitement about the process of discovering appropriate solutions to problems co-operatively.

150. Teaching and learning are very good overall, some excellent teaching was seen during the inspection. In all lessons, the intended learning is made clear from the start and students are helped to learn and use important vocabulary. Students are expected to use these words to explain their thinking or give feedback as they work and this is helping all students but particularly those at an early stage of learning English to develop their understanding of English as well as physical education. Health-related fitness is very well taught. Students progressively take responsibility for organising the warm up in lessons from Year 8 onwards. Their confidence grows as they progress through the school, with GCSE students having in depth knowledge and understanding of this aspect and its application to different sports. Teachers ask appropriate questions to check their understanding or to make them think harder about what they are learning. Grouping in lessons means that students gain the best learning they can, those who need extra support receive it, including those who have special educational needs, while those who are more able have more demanding tasks to complete.

151. Students respond very well to the teaching they receive, noticeably enjoying their learning. The department's positive ethos supports this, as does the good example being set by enthusiastic teachers with high expectations. All students participate; those unable to be part of the practical aspects are fully involved in other ways, for example in evaluating the work of their fellow students.

152. The extra-curricular programme is an outstanding feature, giving boys additional opportunities to develop skills and for some to represent their school in teams. Teachers are very committed to this and students appreciate it. Opportunities for expeditions and additional

accreditation are very well received, especially the highly successful Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Junior Sport Leader Award.

153. Leadership is very good and management is good. The well established team is very well led in a drive for improvement, for example in terms of the use of a video camera in lessons, to record work and give students opportunities to use these recordings to analyse and improve performance. Systems and the every day practicalities are well managed. Longer term planning does not focus with enough precision on improving student achievement so, while this is a focus for the department's work, the means to monitor and measure progress towards this target are not clear.

154. Development and improvement have continued since the last inspection and progress is good. Particular successes have been in the development of speaking and listening, including the good opportunities students have to acquire, learn and use subject vocabulary in lessons.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New courses have been introduced to revitalise subject provision.
- Standards of work show improvement.
- There is a new and energetic vocational learning co-ordinator.
- The department does not have specialist business studies teachers.
- Classes are large and sometimes difficult to manage.

155. Standards in business studies examinations are below the national average for higher grades but all entrants achieved an A*-G pass grade in 2004. A BTEC intermediate award in Entrepreneurship was introduced into the curriculum in September 2003. This is a two-year award and has not yet been externally examined.

156. Standards of work seen in lessons were below average overall. Students have a sound grasp of how businesses work, especially marketing, human resources and finance. In lessons they demonstrate the capacity to use financial techniques such as cashflow analyses in specific case studies, but too many are reliant on each other to complete the work successfully. Levels of achievement are affected by the disruptive behaviour of some students in some lessons, and while higher attaining students continue to work independently, ignoring the interruptions, many students do not achieve enough. The picture is uneven. In other lessons students are totally focused throughout, develop good analytical skills and achieve well. Standards are higher and achievement better in the BTEC Entrepreneurship course. Achievement is satisfactory overall given students' below average starting points.

157. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching is good on the Entrepreneurship course. There is some good teaching on the GCSE course. This is a largely young, newly qualified group of teachers with little experience of teaching business studies and who, as yet, lack opportunities for appropriate professional development in the subject. The size of classes tends to be large with a very wide range of ability. This presents a number of challenges. In lessons with smaller class numbers, learning is often good. Teachers' classroom management skills are not always well matched to larger classes containing disruptive students. The good teaching is characterised by very well structured lessons with an interesting and challenging range of opportunities including practical tasks and good visual materials. This enables students to learn well both independently and in groups. Questioning is stimulating and is used both to reinforce learning and stretch the learning capacity of students. Time and resources are well used and work moves at a good pace. As a result, students enjoy learning about the subject and respond

enthusiastically. The quality of written portfolio work is at least satisfactory, concise, well presented, demonstrating a sound understanding of the subject. Teachers' marking is accurate but does not always identify student's strengths and weaknesses. Therefore students lack guidance on what they need to do to improve their grades.

158. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed vocational learning co-ordinator has been in the post just a few months. At present business studies draws its staff from other departments, notably ICT and science. This presents certain difficulties in creating a cohesive team. The new co-ordinator is beginning to review curriculum provision, schemes of work, assessment strategies and monitoring student progress as well as training for staff. These are all in the early stages of development but the review has the capacity to bring about improvement. Once the review is complete the co-ordinator will be able to set key priorities for subject development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is combined with the PSHE programme for Years 10 and 11 but there are separate PSHE and citizenship lessons for Years 7 to 9.

Provision in personal social and health education and citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' positive attitudes and participation in school life contribute to their understanding of citizenship.
- Teaching quality, though satisfactory overall, is not consistent.
- There are good examples of skilful teaching of controversial topics.
- Community links enhance provision.
- Planning through schemes of work is not detailed enough.

Commentary

159. Standards attained at the end of Years 9 and 11 are somewhat below national expectations. Achievement is satisfactory overall and good in some lessons. When well-informed teachers introduce topics with skill through good use of resources and carefully thought out questioning, students rise to the challenge and readily express their views. They learn well through discussion and work effectively in groups. In such lessons achievement is good and the expectations of the Citizenship programmes are well met.

160. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. A significant proportion of teaching is good and leads to good learning but in years 8 and 9 there is some unsatisfactory teaching in PSHE. The quality of teaching across PSHE and citizenship is not as high as the quality of teaching in the school generally. This is partly explained by some teachers' lack of confidence and grasp of the materials they are using.

161. Teaching is best when teachers not only plan carefully and make expectations clear but use commercial resources flexibly and inventively. When teachers combine their own carefully prepared input with thought-provoking questions which enable students to discuss things together achievement rises. In these lessons students find the topics interesting and take the work seriously. They are motivated and involved, wanting to express a view, and their learning is good. Students' speaking skills are used effectively in the better lessons through discussion, role play and debate. In a Year 8 lesson on children's rights good organization and questioning, combined with interesting resources, enabled students to discuss issues effectively and make thoughtful contributions to a short debate at the end of the lesson followed by a quick vote. This lesson drew well on students' experience but took their thinking further. Relationships are good in most lessons.

162. Some lessons offer a more limited challenge. Students do what is asked of them but are passive, do not become involved and their thinking is relatively shallow. They answer questions but

their responses are brief and undeveloped and they are not asked to explain themselves further. This can arise because teachers are too reliant on paper resources and worksheets which students complete without having to stretch themselves.

163. The time available each week in years 10 and 11 is inadequate so that work is often rushed and incomplete. There is not enough time to do full justice to the citizenship programmes of study. Skills for citizenship developed through other aspects of school life partially compensate for this but do not necessarily involve all students. The school council, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, charity events, public speaking competitions, student surveys all add to the experience of those most actively involved. Good use is made of visitors from the local community organizations, for example the police, banks and the Healthy Schools initiative. There is a good outline course plan but no detailed scheme of work to help ensure that the quality of students' experience is consistent. Subject leaders have undertaken relevant training and are acting on it. Leadership is enthusiastic and focused on further development through self-evaluation and a relevant action plan. There is much work in progress but there is a need now to consolidate and ensure that the quality experience students have in the best lessons is available to all. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i> | <i>Grade</i> |
|--|--------------|
| The overall effectiveness of the school | 4 |
| 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 | 4 |
| Overall standards achieved | 4 |
| Students' achievement | 4 |
| Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 3 |
| Attendance | 4 |
| Attitudes | 3 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 4 |
| Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The quality of education provided by the school | 4 |
| 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 | 2 |
| Accommodation and resources | 5 |
| Students' care, welfare, health and safety | 4 |
| Support, advice and guidance for students | 3 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on students' views | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents | 3 |
| The quality of the school's links with the community | 2 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 3 |
| The leadership and management of the school | 3 |
| The governance of the school | 4 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 2 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 3 |
| The effectiveness of management | 3 |

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