

INSPECTION REPORT

ADEYFIELD SCHOOL

Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117512

Headteacher: Mr P Hepburn

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 13 – 16 September 2004

Inspection number: 268725

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	792
School address:	Longlands Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire
Postcode:	HP2 4DE
Telephone number:	01442 406020
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Stevens
Date of previous inspection:	19 April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed comprehensive school serving the estates to the east of Hemel Hempstead. It is smaller than average with approximately 792 pupils on roll. Apart from two year groups weighted in favour of girls, there is a rough balance of boys to girls. The percentage of pupils eligible for FSM is broadly in line with the national average. This underestimates the degree of personal and economic challenge that many parents face. Few parents have attended higher education and there is a high proportion of single parent families. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not or believed not to be English is higher than most schools. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is well above the national average. Forty per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs and 15 per cent of pupils have a statement of educational need. A very significant number of pupils are receiving support for moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural needs. The school is designated as a school with access for pupils with physical /neurological impairment and pupils have a range of physical difficulties. The majority of pupils are White UK (86 per cent). The largest other ethnic group is Asian British Pakistani pupils (3 per cent). There are relatively small numbers of pupils from a range of ethnic heritages.

Although the roll of the school is expanding, the school is not full and is therefore particularly susceptible to casual admissions. Overall mobility of pupils is above average, but this disguises the fact that significant numbers of pupils join particular year groups. For example, in the last Year 11 cohort of pupils, over a quarter joined the school after Year 7 and a large proportion of these joined in Year 10 and 11. Many of these pupils have learning difficulties and often a history of poor attendance at their previous school. Some casual admissions can have a disproportionate impact on the ethos of the school and can take up considerable time and effort to settle into school expectations and routines.

Overall attainment on entry to the school is improving but is well below average. This is particularly true for the older year groups. Many pupils have weak literacy skills.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2728	Rod Passant	Lead inspector	Drama Theatre studies (sixth form)
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23588	Charanjit Ajitsingh	Team inspector	English as an additional language History Religious education
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	French
8104	Joan Child	Team inspector	Music
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Business studies Business studies (sixth form) Information communication technology Information communication technology (sixth form)
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	Special educational needs Sixth form co-ordinator
12890	Thomas Jardine	Team inspector	Science
15312	Kay Lord	Team inspector	Dance Physical education
28097	Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics
20877	David Pink	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography Leisure and tourism (sixth form)
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Art and design Art and design (sixth form)
1578	Maureen Sinclair	Team inspector	Citizenship (sixth form) Personal, social and health education Personal, social and health education (sixth form) Work-related learning
27351	Michael Stanton	Team inspector	Design and technology

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Adeyfield is a good school with many strong features. Overall, pupils who have been at the school for five years achieve well. Standards are below average but there has been significant on-going improvement. The indications are that the 2004 GCSE results at five A* to C grades are close to the national average. The major reason why the school is successfully raising standards is the overall high quality care and commitment of staff to the pupils¹, the high quality of relationships that exist and members of staff's knowledge of pupils as individuals. Pupils' and students' success lie at the heart of what the school is about. Teaching is good and generates good learning. There are significant strengths in the curriculum, which is being tailored effectively to the needs of the individual pupil. The majority of pupils behave well for most of the time but some pupils present challenging behaviour. Members of staff are skilled at managing behaviour in a positive fashion and they are consistent in raising pupils' self-esteem. Leadership by the headteacher and across the school is good and there is good capacity for the school's further improvement. Current funding is generous but, given the fact that it is very inclusive and the ongoing improvement that has taken place, the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The ethos of care and support and the quality of relationships and mutual respect that exist between staff and pupils. These, coupled with the staff's commitment to the pupils, and the fact that they work very hard on their behalf, form the firm foundation for learning in the school.
- Good teaching is leading to good learning.
- There is good leadership across the school. The senior leadership team is effective and brings a range of strengths. The leadership by the headteacher is good; it is principled and he has been tenacious in ensuring that school improvement and pupils' success lie at the heart of the school and he has been successful in developing the necessary climate to ensure that this is possible.
- The school is improving pupils' literacy skills but there is need for greater rigour in monitoring the effectiveness of departments' strategies.
- Currently, assessment is satisfactory. Assessment needs to be used in a sharper more consistent fashion to help raise standards further.
- Currently, the school is not meeting the full requirements with regard to teaching citizenship. The personal, social and health education programme needs rationalisation and more detail is needed in schemes of work for religious education, particularly within the humanities programme in Years 10 and 11.
- The poor attendance of some pupils handicaps their learning.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen and there has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum has been improved and the school has taken advantage of the flexibility now provided to increase the range of vocational courses.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	D	E	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE	E*	E	E	

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

The 2001 result is based on the average point score whereas the 2002, 2003 result is based on the best eight subjects.

¹ The term pupil is used to describe those receiving full-time education from Years 7 to 11 and the term student is used to describe those attending the sixth form.

Levels of attainment when pupils join the school are well below average. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well below average but there has been year-on-year improvement. Overall, achievement is satisfactory given the pupils starting point, although there is some underachievement particularly amongst boys. The school has developed clear strategies to raise boys' achievement and is steadily improving their performance. Standards at GCSE are improving at a rate above the national trend and there is above average progress compared with similar schools. GCSE results in 2004 indicate that the percentage of pupils gaining five A* to C grades is close to the national average. Girls outperform boys, although boys' performance is improving slowly. The school has significant numbers of pupils who join the school late in their career who do not do as well in their examinations. Often they have had a troubled history in their previous school. These pupils have a significant impact on overall results.

Overall, those pupils who have been in school for the full five years make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting point. Pupils from minority ethnic heritage achieve well. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in their language acquisition. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against their targets.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are mostly good and often better. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The overall rate of attendance is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of education is good. The importance of the good relationships that exist between staff and pupils, which underpin the learning, cannot be overstressed. **Teaching is good.** The curriculum has many strengths, particularly in the development of vocational courses that allow pupils to succeed, the quality of the careers advice and work-related learning. There are weaknesses in the need to rationalise the personal, social citizenship and health education programme and ensure that citizenship meets fully the statutory requirements and in the detailing of what is to be taught in religious education as part of the humanities schemes of work. The quality of care and guidance is good. Guidance for careers is very good. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Pupils benefit from the school's good relationships with the local community and from the school's connections with other educational establishments in the area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good across the school. The headteacher leads the school well. Governance is good. The governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is prepared to challenge the school. It is very supportive and plays a clear role in planning strategically. **Management is good.**

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents have considerable confidence in the care and education provided at this school. They value the teaching and the expectations that the school has of their children, they recognise the efforts made to help pupils mature and they are satisfied by the progress their children make. Pupils are very positive about the school, particularly about the support that they get from teachers and the friendly nature of the community.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's literacy strategy with greater rigour.
- Refine and develop the use of assessment to raise standards.
- Rationalise the PSHCE curriculum and ensure schemes of work are detailed in religious education.
- Continue to work to improve attendance of some pupils and students.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that the statutory requirements for citizenship education are met fully.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Overall, provision in the sixth form is good. The sixth form caters well for its current students by offering a range of vocational courses and others leading to AS level and A level. It also provides a very positive environment for their personal and social development. Teaching in the sixth form is good and students learn well as a result. The recent extension of vocational courses has contributed to the growing popularity of the sixth form. Results show significant improvement in 2004 and the average point score is significantly closer to the national average. The indication from the 2004 results is that students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their standards on entry and many students achieve well. Female students outperform males. Numbers are small and the performance of an individual student has a disproportionate impact on overall percentages. As with the main school, standards are rising. The sixth form is cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Rising standards in examinations.
- The innovative approach to curriculum development that has led to an increased breadth of subject choice to meet the varying needs of the students.
- The good quality of teaching, which is based on a good command of areas of learning and effective planning.
- There are very secure relationships. Students have a high regard for the school and their teachers. Teachers are committed; know their students well and work hard to support their social and academic development.
- There is scope to enhance the quality of students' thinking skills and their powers of critical analysis through heightened discussion and debate.
- Further use could be made of ICT across the curriculum.
- Learning opportunities are lost on the part of some students because of poor attendance.

In 2004, 78 per cent of students went on to continue their education at university. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected. Currently, there are no Adeyfield students following mathematical or science courses. In the case of Leisure and Tourism and Citizenship it was too soon to make overall judgements about provision and the subjects were therefore sampled. A number of other subjects were sampled during the inspection and these observations contributed to the overall judgement about sixth form provision.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English: Good. Standards are improving and levels of achievement are good. Students achieve well because of the good teaching and their own positive attitudes to learning. Standards would be higher if students read widely to inform their
Information and communication technology	Good. The new advanced vocational course has become popular and standards meet national expectations. Students in Years 12 and 13 achieve well due to good teaching.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and Design: Very good. Students' achievement is very good. High standards are gained at A and AS level, because the department is extremely well led and managed and courses are meticulously planned and linked to gallery visits. Drama: Good. Students' achieve well because of good teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and experience in the examination demands. Very good relationships between staff and

Business

Business Education: Good. The established advanced vocational course (AVCE) is popular and students achieve well due to good teaching. Standards meet national expectations and

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The head of sixth form and the form tutors provide a very good quality of support and guidance in Years 12 and 13. Information about sixth form courses is clear and students are well prepared for the requirements of vocational, AS level and A2 level courses. There are good extra-curricular opportunities. The quality of advice offered in preparation for university entry is very good, and students are very well informed about careers opportunities and the world of work. There are good reporting and review procedures.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership of the sixth form is good. The head of sixth form is committed to maximising educational opportunities for her students. She has a clear vision for improvement. Day-to-day administration is effective.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Discussion between inspectors and a significant number of sixth form students, both formally and informally, indicates that students are very positive about the sixth form, the range of subjects offered, the quality of teaching and the level of support they receive. The strengths they have identified are justified.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall, pupils who have been in school for five years achieve well. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the lower part of the school and this improves in Years 10 and 11. Casual admissions to the school often arrive late in their school career, do not do as well and remain a challenge for the school, although there are clear induction and systems in place to improve their achievement. There is some underachievement, particularly amongst boys, but the school is managing slowly to erode boys' low aspirations. Pupils' low literacy skills remain a barrier to examination success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 9 test results show year-on-year improvement for the past three years.
- Improvement in GCSE results is above the national trend.
- The five A* to C results in the 2004 GCSE examination results are close to the national average.
- Results in the sixth form in 2004 show significant improvement and the average point score is closing on national averages. As with the main school, standards are rising; female students outperform males.

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average, although recently improving. Pupils, particularly boys, have weak literacy skills as indicated by the school's own testing. By the end of Year 9 overall standards in the 2003 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science were well below average and the five-year trend up to 2003 was below the national trend. For the past three years, however, there has been a year-on-year improvement both in the average points score² and the proportion of pupils gaining level 5+ and level 6+. The indications are that, in English, standards in 2004 are broadly in line with the national average³. Results in mathematics and science have been hampered by staff recruitment difficulties – particularly so in science – and remain well below average, although showing sustained improvement. The overall progress made is well below average compared with similar schools, that is, schools which had similar results in the Key Stage 2 tests. However, although there remains significant underachievement, given their starting point, and standards in other subjects, overall achievement is satisfactory. The majority of pupils make the kind of progress that might be expected given their starting point. Girls continue to do better than boys but the school is successfully narrowing the gap because of a coherent attempt to raise boys' levels of achievement.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.1 (30.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.6 (31.6)	35.4 (34.7)

² The average point score is a fairer method of determining overall performance than simply comparing the proportion gaining a specific grade or level. Essentially, each grade or level is ascribed a numerical value, the results totalled and divided by the numbers taking the examination or test. It is particularly important when numbers taking the examination are relatively small and the performance of an individual can make a significant difference.

³ There is as yet no comparative data for 2004 and judgements are made comparing the school's results with the national 2003 average.

science	30.2 (29.7)	33.6 (33.3)
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There were 132 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards at GCSE in 2003 were below average. They were, however, well above average compared with similar schools. The trend in the average points score was above the national trend. Girls outperform boys, scoring close to the national median in 2003, whilst boys' performance was below the national median; but again, as with younger pupils, boys' performance is improving. In general, pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 in that they perform better than might be expected given their starting point in Year 9.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	37 (37)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	85 (90)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	28.2 (30.8)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 114 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- In the 2004 GCSE examinations, 47 per cent of pupils gained the equivalent of five A* to C grades, which, although below, is close to the national average. That said, the indications are that the five A* to G grades declined, as did the average point score.
- The picture is complicated by the high proportion of pupils who join the school from Year 9 onwards. School analysis indicates that the average point score of a mid-term admission is significantly below that of indigenous pupils. Indeed, in the Key Stage 3 tests, they made an overall 5 per cent difference to the proportion gaining level 5+ bringing the school's results much closer to the published targets. This picture is replicated in the 2004 results at GCSE when a quarter of pupils were mid-term admissions, many with poor attendance and a history of difficulties at their previous school. Some have additional needs, particularly relating to behaviour. It is the performance of these pupils that pulls down the overall average point score. A few of the pupils, although nominally on roll, did not attend despite the best efforts of the school and the education welfare service. The school is scrupulous in calculating its results by using the full roll regardless of attendance.
- In the sample of lessons seen, achievement was judged to be good or better in nearly two-thirds of lessons and sound or better in most. There were few lessons where pupils were seen not working at least in line with their capability. Overall, pupils who have been at the school for the full five years achieve well in relation to their starting point. The 2004 GCSE A* to C result mark a significant step-change in that there is now half the cohort who are aiming to achieve and do well. The school has managed step-by-step improvement over the past few years to achieve this critical mass of achievement; the inspection team support the view of the deputy headteacher that 'the school has turned a corner'.
- The challenges facing the school with regard to supporting mid-term admissions remain but there have been improvements in the school's induction and support structures to facilitate their assimilation and support their achievement.

7. Nationally, the performance of boys, particularly White UK boys with non-professional backgrounds, shows significant underachievement. The school has taken this issue firmly on board and has developed a coherent strategy to tackle this, drawing on the Key Stage 3 strategy.⁴ Progress in this regard is sustained, evident in the Year 9 tests and GCSE results. Eroding the peer culture of low aspirations remains a challenge. Within class, there is no clear evidence to suggest boys are underachieving although it is the boys who are more likely to present challenging behaviour and display less mature independent learning skills.
8. The school has identified gifted and talented pupils as part of its strategy to raise the attainment of all pupils but the work is at an early stage and has not yet had a chance to have an impact on the proportion of very high grades.
9. Pupils from a minority ethnic heritage tend to do well, as do pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers within class and they are supported well by learning support assistants. There is the need for tighter management and evaluation of their progress over time making more effective use of data in order to judge the success of the various interventions.
10. Numeracy standards are promoted consistently and well within mathematics and pupils' number skills, particularly in younger year groups, are close to average standards. Many pupils use mental and non-standard methods of calculation effectively. However, they do not always apply these skills to inform answers obtained with the aid of calculators. The use and enhancement of numeracy are not well promoted across the curriculum.
11. Students enter the school with weak literacy skills because they are unable to write and speak English fluently and flexibly at length and in a range of different contexts. There are improvements by Year 11 when literacy skills are below average. Reading standards are higher and pupils are able to understand a range of increasingly difficult texts as they move through the school. Listening skills are good.
12. Pupils ICT skills are below average by the end of Year 9 but they develop their competence in Years 10 and 11. The significant investment in ICT is raising achievement but, although statutory requirements are met, the use of ICT in other subjects to raise standards of achievement needs to be developed further.
13. A significant improvement since the last inspection is the school's systems to track pupils' progress and further improvement to these systems is ongoing. This allows the school to identify underachieving pupils and to put in place specific strategies such as the mentoring of individuals by senior staff.

Sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	79.6 (84.6)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	24.5 (12.8)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	152.1 (138.9)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 14 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

⁴ The Key Stage 3 Strategy (Years 7 to 9) aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning, developing cross-curricular skills, such as literacy and numeracy, and helping pupils who come into Year 7 below level 4 to make faster progress. The strategy is based on four key principles: raising expectations, improving progression from primary school, promoting teaching and learning styles that engage and motivate pupils and demand their active participation and providing professional development and support for teachers.

14. The 2004 results show significant improvement, with an average point score of 235. Female students out-performed male, in that 60 per cent of girls achieved around the national average total points score compared with 40 per cent of boys. Numbers are, however, small and comparing percentages problematic. On the basis of these latest results, overall, students' achievements are at least sound and for many good.
15. There are a number of factors that are leading to sustained improvement and raising pupils' and students' achievement. These are dealt with in more detail throughout the report so they are only outlined here.
 - Pupils suffer from low academic self-esteem. Their reaction is often 'I can't do that'. It is quality of relationships, which exist between all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, and pupils, founded as they are on a deep understanding of the pupils they teach, which is the key ingredient in cajoling, aiding and supporting them to the realisation that 'they can.'
 - The tailoring of the curriculum; the introduction of a range of vocational courses, and specifically the very significant investment in ICT facilities, is making a very significant contribution in that pupils can demonstrate their strengths not battle with their weaknesses.
 - The overall quality of care and advice coupled with the stability and security of a friendly community.
 - The tenacious determination to raise standards demonstrated by the leadership of the school and the raising of pupils' achievement lies at the heart of what the school is about, coupled with effective management systems to track progress.
 - Pupils have good experiences in lessons, which across the day and week build cumulatively a steady beat of high expectations.

There are also factors which impede improvement:

- Pupils' low levels of literacy skills.
- Whilst there is care and commitment, teachers need to make better use of on-going assessment to hone their teaching strategies and judge their effectiveness.
- Factors causing discontinuity of learning – the most obvious being the poor attendance of a minority of pupils – despite the school's best efforts.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are mostly good and often better. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The overall rate of attendance is unsatisfactory despite the school's best efforts.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good, supportive relationships with one another and with staff.
- Most pupils demonstrate good attitudes in lessons.
- Pupils' self-esteem is developed effectively by the school's work.
- Low levels of attendance disrupt some pupils' learning.
- There is some passivity among pupils.
- A few pupils exhibit challenging behaviour.

Commentary

16. Relationships are good among all members of the school community. Boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds get on well together. They feel that the potential for conflict is reduced by the relatively small size of the school, which means that all the people in it know virtually everyone else, which allows a family atmosphere to develop. Both pupils and parents agree that bullying is not a major problem partly because of this and because any incidents are handled effectively, as directed by the school's policies.

17. Pupils' show good attitudes to their work in lessons. They respond well to teachers' enthusiasm and enjoy the opportunities for debate or argument that are provided, for example, during personal, social and health education. They follow teachers' directions carefully, which enables lessons to be productive, but sometimes this compliance shades into reliance and passivity, leading to a lack of independence. Nevertheless, pupils relish opportunities to be creative, for example, in art, and work together well when required, such as in physical education. In a small minority of lessons, a few pupils are disruptive. However, the school has extensive strategies for minimising the impact of their challenging behaviour on other pupils; these include effective classroom management by teachers, the regular presence of senior staff, and the option of 'time-out' in the learning support unit. The success of the school's strategies is demonstrated by the fact that fixed period exclusions occur at a low rate for a school of this type and no pupils were excluded permanently in the last year.
18. The school acts effectively to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils understand that they are expected to work hard in order to do their best and they unaffectedly support their peers, both spontaneously and in more formal arrangements such as 'buddies' for Year 7 classes. Their spiritual development, which includes such components as an atmosphere of respect and care for others, a recognition of exceptional qualities in people and an appreciation of creativity, is now good. This is an important improvement since the last inspection. The positive features of pupils' personal development reported at that time have been sustained. There is still a commendable openness and respect for others, and pupils continue to benefit from the broad range of cultural experiences which the school provides.
19. Pupils broaden their understanding of how to live in a civilized society through discussion and experience. Their emulation of the very good role models provided by adults in their community promotes a friendly and caring environment where pupils feel comfortable and able to pursue their interests. It is a tribute to the community that pupils who enter the school other than at the start of Year 7, and those with physical disabilities or other special needs, feel welcome and that their contributions are fully recognised. Extra-curricular activities are popular and many pupils take the opportunity to participate in residential trips, some of which take them to other countries. Participation in activities such as these or the school council has the intended effect of promoting the development of pupils' self-esteem and is a crucial factor that helps them to do as well as they can in both academic and social activities.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.8	School data	1.1
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

20. There is a good range of strategies to ensure that pupils come to school when they should; this has improved the rate of attendance over the last few years. Nevertheless, in the last academic year the rate of attendance was well below the national median. A significant proportion of absence is attributable to a small number of persistent absentees both in the main school and sixth form who are for various reasons, typically related to their domestic circumstances, resistant to the best efforts of staff, some of whom are employed specifically to support and encourage attendance. An increasingly significant cause of absence is family holidays taken during term-time. The effect of all these absences is not confined to the pupils involved, but reduces the effectiveness of teaching for others. Punctuality is satisfactory, overall.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	666	23	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	11	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	24	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6	0	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	23	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the quality of education provided is good. Teaching is good and there are significant strengths in the curriculum that more than balance the weaknesses. The provision for work-related learning is good and the development of vocational courses is raising achievement, along with the investment in ICT.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching is good and is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. In the sample of lessons seen, it is sometimes very good, occasionally excellent and only very rarely unsatisfactory. The school has a core of very experienced staff so that, despite difficulties in teacher recruitment in some subjects, such as science and mathematics, the school has sustained and improved the pupils' classroom experiences. The key feature, which underpins learning in the school, is the overall commitment of staff to the pupils and the very positive relationships that exist. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very positive working relationships and the commitment of teachers to encouraging and engaging the pupils are key factors in ensuring that pupils' learning is productive.
- There is an increasing use of a range of learning styles to motivate and meet the different needs of pupils.
- The strong emphasis on challenging pupils is resulting in good levels of concentration and interest, thus raising academic aspirations.
- There is some good practice in the use of assessment and the development of literacy and numeracy but these skills are not consistently used by all subject teachers.

Commentary

21. The quality of teaching in the main school is good and leads to good learning in lessons. Teaching is good or better in the majority of subjects but particularly so in English, design and technology and art. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
22. The key characteristics, which make for good teaching, are:
- The very good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. This is a key element in the good learning at the school. Teachers are fully committed to encouraging and supporting pupils and to raising their aspirations. As a result, established teachers manage pupils very well and insist on good standards of behaviour. Generally, there is a calm work ethic in the classroom. Pupils, in discussion, acknowledge that members of staff do not 'give up' on pupils. They use phrases such as 'teachers go the extra mile' to explain their commitment and their appreciation of the extra classes and revision opportunities that are provided.
 - Teachers have mainly good subject expertise and they are interested in and enthusiastic about the subjects they teach and communicate this enthusiasm well. Some teachers also adopt a relentless focus on thorough preparation for examinations in order to raise pupils' aspirations. Teachers plan effectively, particularly in art, ICT and design technology where information and activities are very well structured to meet the needs of individual pupils and extend their learning.
 - Teachers and teaching assistants in most subject areas work very well together to support individual pupils' learning. Again, long-established relationships foster good attitudes to learning in lessons.
 - Good learning is also promoted for all pupils when a range of visual material such as short dramatic video clips are used to capture attention.
 - Teachers' active engagement with the National Strategies – particularly the Key Stage 3 strategy⁵ – is having a positive impact on the classroom methods that teachers use, particularly in English and mathematics, but increasingly in other subject areas. The injection of ICT, although this could be further developed, is also helping to lift pupils' achievement.
 - Above all, members of staff have widespread understanding and knowledge of the pupils and are consistent in the attention they give to the hobble of low self-esteem.
23. It is this commitment shown by staff towards the pupils, including those pupils with additional needs, which carries them forward. In some ways, it compensates for the lack of forensic detail in the application of specific strategies to enable the pupils to progress, which stems from detailed application of assessment strategies and the monitoring of whether the strategies are effective.
24. In lessons seen, pupils with additional needs generally made good gains in knowledge and understanding. Where lessons were most effective, the pupils were given clear guidance on

⁵ The Key Stage 3 Strategy (Years 7 to 9) aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning, developing cross-curricular skills, such as literacy and numeracy, and helping pupils who come into Year 7 below level 4 to make faster progress. The strategy is based on four key principles: raising expectations, improving progression from primary school, promoting teaching and learning styles that engage and motivate pupils and demand their active participation and providing professional development and support to teachers.

the steps required to achieve the learning objectives. Individual education plans provide clear overall targets for pupils, and the range of information relating to strategies and approaches is adequate. Overall, teachers are aware of the broad needs of pupils with special educational needs; they modify their teaching strategies and the resources used in lessons to include them.

25. Learning support assistants play an important part in the overall provision. There is good liaison between subject teachers and learning support assistants, especially where learning support assistants are allocated to departments (as in English, mathematics and science). The learning support assistants are well aware of the needs of the pupils they are supporting. They provide the help and challenge required to enable these pupils to become more independent in their learning. Learning support staff provide input to pupil reviews. There is a good level of planning for lessons between subject teachers and learning support staff.
26. A part-time specialist teacher of English as an additional language spends one and a half days a week in school. Pupils are assessed on entry and every term. Specific 'English as an additional language' support is given to the most needy. It is effective on an individual small-group basis in class or on a withdrawal basis. The quality of teaching is good and is linked to the teaching in class. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. English as an additional language teaching staff work in a support role only and, therefore, concentrate on a small number of targeted pupils mainly in English, mathematics and science lessons. There is no partnership teaching or effective joint planning within departments, using the specialist expertise available, to improve the coverage of skills in English as an additional language, which could provide support for a wider group of pupils as well as spreading good practice across the school. This strategic role requires further development.
27. Using assessment as an effective aid to raise standards and to engage pupils in their own learning has been adopted well in some subject areas. In English, for example, the pupils regularly reply to teachers' written comments on their work. In ICT, design and technology, pupils are often clear about what they must do to improve. Such good practice, however, does not take place consistently across all subject areas. Not all teachers prioritise improving the pupils' literacy skills through marking and oral work. In a number of curriculum areas, teachers miss opportunities to set subject-specific targets that can be followed up in lessons and in homework. Because pupils are not always clear how to improve, they remain over-dependant on their teachers and can adopt a passive approach to their learning. Whilst good learning often takes place in lessons, the fact that pupils are not taking real responsibility for their own learning diminishes the impact of good teaching over time and accounts for some low results at the end of Year 11. The school has yet to unlock the pupils' commitment, so that they bring more of their energies to the learning. There are occasions when teachers are working harder than the pupils.
28. In general, insufficient planned opportunities are given for pupils to explore, rehearse and present ideas orally. Many pupils find developing the ideas necessary for a piece of extended writing difficult and oral work would help fuel this process. Clearly, it also has particular application to pupils at intermediate and relatively advanced skills of learning English as an additional language developing their bilingual skills. Additionally, there is a lack of consistency in departmental planning to develop pupils' thinking skills and the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Fine-tuning of teachers' diagnosis of pupils' learning needs translated into specific learning activities remains to be further developed.
29. In the sample of lessons seen, the very few unsatisfactory lessons occurred where teachers were very new to the school and had not yet established a solid understanding with the pupils or where teachers found occasional challenging behaviour difficult to manage. Because the quality of relationships plays such an important part in underpinning good learning, discontinuities caused by changes of staff have a disproportionate impact on learning compared with other schools. 'Their teacher' is very important and when 'their teacher' is not

there, because of illness or other factors, learning slows. Teachers are not easily transferable in this school.

30. As indicated earlier, other causes of discontinuity slow learning. The most obvious cause is variable attendance of a few pupils. The school's timetable tries to minimise the impact of poor attendance because there are, particularly in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science, regular opportunities to study the subject throughout the week and there is a steady 'beat' of good learning experiences which has a cumulative effect over the day and week as the school's expectations are consistently reinforced. There is also the advantage that pupils meet 'their' teachers and indeed their favourite subjects on a regular basis.
31. Parents were concerned about the quality and regularity of homework and the feedback that pupils receive. It was not easy at the start of the academic year to make overall judgements about these issues. The school recognises the importance of homework but there are issues of consistency, with some departments making more effective use of it than others. Departments that make effective use of it are adding to the regular 'beat' of high expectations. Overall, there are strengths balanced by weaknesses of inconsistency and homework is satisfactory.

Sixth form

32. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Many of the characteristics of good teaching seen in the main school apply to the sixth form. As with the main school, the quality of relationships that exist are fundamental to the learning. Indeed, they are often the reason that the pupils feel confident of making the transition into the post-16 provision. Teachers know the students and support them well. Good subject knowledge is coupled with good knowledge about the examination structures and their enthusiasm for the subject they teach is communicated well.
33. Overall, it is the very significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection that is a key factor leading to pupils' higher achievement and attainment.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 129 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor	Poor	Very Poor
3 (2%)	24 (19%)	66 (51%)	32 (25%)	4 (3%)	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.

34. The overall judgement about the quality of teaching is not simply based on the sample of lessons seen but also takes into account other evidence such as scrutiny of pupils' books.

The curriculum

The curriculum is inclusive, responsive to the range of needs and is contributing significantly to increased pupil achievement. In addition, there are further significant strengths in the good range and access to a variety of courses across the 14 to 19 curriculum and the work-related curriculum. There are weaknesses relating to citizenship, the need to rationalise the personal, social, citizenship and health education and to ensure that the religious education element in the Humanities course is detailed sufficiently so that it is clearly distinctive. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The tailoring of the curriculum to meet pupils' needs and the development of 14 to 19 pathways is raising achievement but requires further co-ordination.
- There is very good careers advice.

- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop over time.
- Citizenship does not fully meet the statutory requirement and the programme for personal development requires rationalisation. Pupils are taught religious education but schemes of work require further detailing.

Commentary

35. The school is very committed to matching the curriculum to the needs of its pupils and students. It has taken advantage of the increased flexibility to introduce vocationally orientated courses, which by their design and content and the demands to teach them in a practical way ensures that they are particularly relevant to the pupils and students. The range and extent of courses available to the post-16 students is enhanced through consortium arrangements, which on paper allow access to a very broad range of courses, although students tend to opt for the teachers they know. This commitment to tailoring the curriculum to the student is raising students' achievement and is particularly successful. It is further enhanced by the quality of very good independent careers advice and the development of emerging pathways through the 14 to 19 provision, which, along with quality work experience, ensure that there is, overall, across the school, a clear and developing commitment to work-related learning. The development of level 1, 2, 3⁶ courses from a wide range of subject disciplines indicates a willingness and readiness by staff to respond to this challenge, which requires further curriculum co-ordination and clarification of the emerging pathways over time. The school is seeking to enhance this commitment by bidding for specialist status in Business Enterprise. If successful, this will also help to address the issues relating to lack of independent learning skills. Whilst the school has clearly built an infrastructure where such status would considerably assist the developments taking place – all departments need to be clear of their contribution to establishing the enterprise culture should the bid be successful.
36. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study a core of subjects with a choice element. The subjects in the options are constructed around pupil choice filtered by guidance and encouragement. This can throw up apparent anomalies whereby, for example, currently, double science is set against modern foreign languages. It will be important for the school to ensure that pupils' programmes are sufficiently balanced and provide equally appropriate pathways for the more academic pupil, particularly as, using this example, the school has made considerable investment in both languages and science and is striving to ensure that pupils' take-up in both areas is enhanced.
37. While pupils' literacy skills and their numeracy skills improve over time greater consistency is required to further enhance their skills in these aspects, particularly by ensuring that all departments are consistent in facing up to the challenge associated with enhancing pupils' language and oracy skills and thus the rigour and depth of their thinking. Pupils have a basic competence in ICT.
38. The opportunities for enrichment are good. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities – sport and the arts are represented well, and the school has a programme of residential trips abroad, which sixth form students recall and speak of with great affection.
39. There has been good improvement to the provision for pupils with special educational needs since the last inspection and the overall provision is good. The special educational needs co-ordinator demonstrates a keen concern for her pupils and sets the tone for a caring department, which maintains secure and warm relationships that ensure pupils make good progress against their targets. Learning support assistants offer good levels of support for individual pupils and work closely with subject departments. The Learning Support Unit makes an effective contribution to the education of pupils with particular behavioural difficulties.

⁶ Qualifications in vocational and academic subjects are described in terms of level, with level 1 describing foundation courses, level 2 being the equivalent of GCSE and level 3 the equivalent of advanced level AS /A2 examinations.

40. Most pupils who have English as an additional language have full access to the whole curriculum, including the National Curriculum and religious education, and are well integrated. Only those who are at the initial stages are withdrawn from classes on a time-limited basis and some also receive support in classes; but it is not consistent across the school and only covers English, mathematics and science, when available. Some of the pupils who have English as an additional language, also have special educational needs. There is no designated room for EAL where resources could be stored or small group teaching done. The library is often used for the purpose. There was little evidence of sufficient high quality, culturally relevant visual aids and bilingual resources for the different languages that exist in the school.
41. The accommodation has a number of strengths and weaknesses and is satisfactory, overall. The school has made significant investment in refurbishing the environment of the school to make it as attractive as possible, which, coupled with the high quality of care of the site staff, makes a significant contribution to the overall ethos of the school, based as it is on developing mutual respect. The school has made significant investment in ICT resources and the computer to pupil ratio is very good. There is a shortage of book resources within humanities. Despite difficulties in recruitment in recent years, the school is currently fully staffed and there is, overall, a good match of staff to the curriculum requirements.
42. The library is making a good contribution as a resource for pupils' learning. The room can accommodate a class for a library-based lesson as well as sixth formers undertaking private reading or research. There is also an adjacent tutorial room for study purposes. An appropriate range of fiction and non-fiction texts and reference material is available to pupils, together with audio and videotapes. The room is equipped with eight computers. An induction programme on the use of the library is in place for Year 7 pupils and departments make good use of the facilities.
43. There are three areas of weakness in the curriculum. The overall provision for citizenship does not meet requirements because an important strand is not yet sufficiently developed. Pupils are taught citizenship and a specific course as part of a personal, social, health, and citizenship education (PSHCE) course, which is becoming overcrowded and in need of further rationalisation. For older pupils, the citizenship provision is enhanced by an integrated humanities course that supplements the PSHCE programme. All departments are expected to contribute to citizenship but their contribution is often implicit and supportive and not yet clear enough. The school has been successful in appointing a specialist citizenship teacher who has a clear understanding of the needs of the subject but requires senior management support to ensure that whole-school aspects are embedded.
44. Whilst the PSHCE course covers the required elements and it was not possible to see it taught, the planned provision in personal, social and health education is satisfactory, but requiring review to ensure that sufficient time is given to the appropriate elements. More detail is also required in the schemes of work to provide support for individual tutors who have to teach the programme as well as specific co-ordination by all those co-ordinating an aspect of the provision.
45. The third weakness relates to the statutory requirement to teach religious education in Years 10 and 11. Currently, it is taught within the Humanities course and pupils receive a basic religious education entitlement and the school meets statutory requirements. However, schemes of work lack sufficient detail to ensure a common entitlement of the specific religious education elements and the overt exploration of specific religious education themes is currently open to individual interpretation by members of staff.
46. The strengths of the curriculum, the fact that it is inclusive, responsive to the range of needs and is significantly contributing to increased pupils' achievement more than balances the weaknesses. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Sixth form

47. The curriculum for the sixth form is good. The sixth form caters well for its current students by offering a range of vocational courses and others leading to AS level and A level. It also provides a very positive environment for their personal and social development. The recent extension of vocational courses has contributed to the growing popularity of the sixth form.
48. The implications of the previous report indicated that the school was not meeting the requirement to teach religious education in the sixth form. The school responded to this criticism by increasing the religious education element in the PSHE programme provided for students. Prior to the inspection, the school undertook an evaluation against the locally agreed syllabus, which identified that this statutory component lacked rigour. It indicated as such in governors' self-evaluation prepared for the inspection but stated that enhanced provision would be in place for the academic year 2004/5. This has been carried out. The planned provision meets the time requirements and the demands that it should be a course covering the four aspects determined in the syllabus. The school has ensured that the timetable allows the religious education specialist to make planned inputs into the post-16 personal, social and health education provision on a regular half-termly basis. The school meets the requirements.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes good care of pupils' welfare, health and safety. Their academic and personal development are monitored and supported well. The school's efforts to involve pupils and take account of their views are successful.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong ethos of care and support pervades the school.
- Very good guidance on careers and course options is provided.
- Pupils relate well to staff and are confident to approach them for support.
- Pupils feel very comfortable in the school; they expect and receive respect.
- Advice is based on a thorough understanding of individual pupils' needs.
- Careers education and guidance (CEG) are very good.

Commentary

49. In order to realise its caring aims the school works hard to sustain a distinct focus on understanding and meeting the needs of all pupils. This is achieved through the relationships which are established and maintained between staff and pupils. These relationships include both the extensive explicit recognition of pupils' achievements, which helps to build their self-esteem, and also very clear expectations of high standards of behaviour, so they know exactly where they stand.
50. Information about new pupils is gathered effectively, insofar as this is within the school's control. Assessment results are passed on from primary schools but a significant number of pupils join the school later than the beginning of Year 7 and sometimes information about these pupils' special educational needs is slow to arrive. Emerging assessment data is shared among staff and is supplemented by the personal knowledge amassed through friendly interactions of pupils with their teachers, form tutors, year heads and other staff, such as attendance project workers. Added together, this prepares staff well to give advice, and pupils are confident to approach them in anticipation of a friendly reception, authoritative guidance and helpful support. The advice pupils receive, for example, regarding careers, is of very high quality because of the comprehensive preparation of the advisers, and pupils are justified in feeling well cared for.
51. The school council has been developed to a point where pupils feel they have a voice and are able to influence matters in their school. Elected representatives are considered an effective channel for communication between the pupils and the management of the school. One sub-committee is currently developing improved safe routes for travel to school. Pupils appreciate that if a proposal cannot be implemented, the school takes care to explain the reason.
52. The school premises are kept in good order, both for the health of all who work there and to demonstrate the importance that is attached to the spiritual well-being of pupils. Child protection is a high priority so care is taken to ensure that staff training and the school's arrangements comply with the latest advice. Effective systems for dealing with pupils' medical needs or accidents are in place. There are sufficient members of staff with suitable first aid training and the school's nurse is supported by a visiting colleague. A good amount of safety expertise is available within subject departments, so pupils are prepared well for hazards and risk assessments are routinely incorporated when planning activities, including visits outside the school.
53. Careers education and guidance (CEG) are very good. Work experience is a particularly strong feature, which receives positive comments from pupils, parents and local employers. Pupils benefit from careful induction and skilled debriefing. Pupils from Year 7 onwards have a coherent curriculum, which links a focus on self-review with high quality information. For example, Year 9 and 11 pupils and their parents benefit from skilled advice from staff and

independent advisers about their subject and career options. Pupils have the opportunity to meet the local Connexions personal adviser, who is most appreciative of the school's work and the detailed knowledge that school staff have of their young people. Members of staff are good at identifying those pupils who require specific, specialist help and ensuring that they meet the right person. Very good accommodation, good resources and the skilled use of a new administrative assistant enhance the very well planned CEG curriculum. A highly committed co-ordinator has vision and a belief in the importance of CEG and this has been an important factor in the good improvement since the last inspection. Well-chosen future targets include further extending the role of CEG in Years 7 and 8 and more intensive use of the new ICT hardware. CEG makes a very good contribution to work-related learning and pupils' personal development.

54. The teacher of English as an additional language enables pupils who are new to the school to develop good and trusting relationships. The teaching and support staff provide access to well-informed support, advice and guidance, based on their good understanding and monitoring of the pupils' academic and personal circumstances. There are good induction arrangements for them and pupils are helped to take GCSE examinations in their first language, even though it is not a taught subject in the school; for example, a student took GCSE Farsi last year.
55. The special educational needs co-ordinator demonstrates a keen concern for her pupils and works diligently on their behalf. Relationships are secure and warm. Members of the department, including the staff working in the learning support unit, offer pupils a very good level of personal and academic support. There are monthly meetings to review pupil progress between the SENCO and the team of learning support assistants. The special educational needs co-ordinator holds meetings with individual learning support assistants on a weekly basis. Meetings with heads of year and heads of department are only held on an informal basis. Therefore, some decisions as to appropriate interventions may be insufficiently responsive. The provision of subject-specific targets is inconsistent. The progress of pupils with additional needs is monitored through a range of assessments, including observations, base-line assessment, National Curriculum tests and standardised tests. Support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs are comprehensive. They are offered the same support and guidance as other pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator holds meetings with the careers counsellor to review the career objectives of pupils with special educational needs. The careers counsellor attends all meetings held with parents of pupils with statements.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Pupils benefit from the school's good relationships with the local community and from the school's connections with other educational establishments in the area.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is open and responsive to parent's views.
- Good financial and other support is received from businesses.
- Partnerships with agencies are effective.
- Some parents are not fully committed to their children's education.

Commentary

56. Most parents have considerable confidence in the care and education provided at this school. They value the teaching and the expectations that the school has of their children, they recognise the efforts made to help pupils mature and they are satisfied by the progress their children make. Inspection evidence supports parents' positive views of the school. Some

parents expressed concerns about homework but, despite inconsistencies, this provision was found to be satisfactory, overall. There was no general agreement among parents about the standard of behaviour but observation and other evidence shows that behaviour is generally good and there is no major bullying problem.

57. The positive relationship with parents described in the last inspection report has been successfully maintained. The Parents Association meets regularly and provides good opportunities for the school and parents to hear and discuss each other's views. Two project workers and other staff strive to convince parents of the importance of avoiding unnecessary absence, but a few prove hard to persuade. Ideas such as offering parenting classes have been floated and would improve relationships further if realised, as well as providing the important benefit of enabling more parents to provide support for their children's work at home.
58. Reports on pupils' progress provide information on what has been taught as well as telling parents how well their children are doing. The quality of reports varies among teachers but many provide useful specific advice on how to improve in that subject. There are a suitable number of parents' evenings and parents are also invited to academic review days, where they have a good opportunity to discuss their children's progress with their teachers and to help formulate suitable targets. School documents, such as the governor's annual report and the regular newsletter, 'Action Adeyfield', provide further useful information, although pupils' planners are not used as consistently as they could be for communication between teachers and parents.
59. Good liaison with the feeder primary schools allows the efficient transfer of information about incoming pupils, and both parents and pupils praise the arrangements for induction. The Junior Sports Leader scheme takes pupils to work in primary schools, but few subject departments have close relationships with other primary or secondary schools. However, several departments make good use of the wider community to support the curriculum, particularly art and music, for which frequent visits and visitors are organised. The links with businesses noted in the last inspection report continue to provide substantial benefits, which extend beyond the financial support received from a local major retailer. All pupils have the opportunity to experience the world of work at the end of Year 11 through arrangements made with local companies and other organisations. A range of agencies provides valuable support for pupils, including that for aspects of attendance and behaviour.
60. The English as an additional language teacher maintains a good liaison with families and carers and organises interpretation, when needed. The special educational needs co-ordinator endeavours to involve parents in the planning of individual education plan targets and the annual reviews that are held for pupils with statements. Parental involvement has a positive impact on the motivation and progress of the pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator has set up a support group for parents of pupils with special educational needs. The learning support manager makes contact with parents as appropriate.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is good and he is supported effectively by the senior leadership team who bring to their role a range of skills and strengths. There has been significant improvement in the quality of leadership since the last inspection. Leadership across the school is good and consequently there is a good capacity for further improvement. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and play a clear role in strategic planning. Management is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good capacity for on-going improvement.
- The governing body is very supportive and some have remained committed to the school over a long period.
- Management of finance, performance management and staff development are good.

- Management of special educational needs requires tighter evaluation of the effectiveness of strategies and use of data to monitor and track progress.
- There are management issues within humanities; roles and responsibilities require clarification.

Commentary

61. The governing body is very supportive of the school and brings to it a wide range of personal and professional skills. Members take their role seriously and individuals have undergone training. There is a very good relationship between the governing body and the senior leadership team. The governors have a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and there is a clear focus on raising standards. They are prepared to make difficult decisions on behalf of the pupils and they have a significant strategic influence. The performance management of the headteacher is well established and there is good level of accountability through the curriculum committee meeting heads of department.
62. The governing body responded to the criticisms of the previous report in relation to statutory requirements. Pupils receive a religious education entitlement in Years 10 and 11, although work is required to ensure that the teaching is not open to individual interpretation. The governing body expect all pupils to experience full assemblies and three class assemblies. On the basis of a limited sample these class assemblies can vary in quality and more rigorous monitoring is required to ensure a consistent approach. Religious education is now taught in the sixth form. Currently, the school is not meeting the full requirements of citizenship that has been introduced since the last report and this will need to be addressed by the governing body.
63. The headteacher has been tenacious in his determination to raise standards and the opportunity to make some key appointments in recent years has helped establish a clear climate of raised expectations. The school has a strong sense of direction and a clear articulated plan for improvement. He is principled and communication is open. Pupils and their success lie at the heart of the school. The school has recently been awarded the Investors in People award. He is supported effectively by the senior leadership team who bring a range of strengths and experience to the team.
64. The school runs efficiently and is a calm, stable community. The arrangements for performance management are well established as part of the school's monitoring and review of provision and are contributing to the improving trend in standards. All teachers' objectives for improvement are linked to the school's drive for raising academic standards and providing for pupils' personal development. The appraisal of teaching and the work of the support staff are undertaken rigorously and there is an extensive professional development programme of good quality in place. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance are appropriate and implemented efficiently.
65. The school has successfully put in place systems and procedures and has clear expectations. The challenge now facing it is to ensure that there is (a) consistency between and within departments and amongst the various pastoral teams and (b) monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of whole-school strategies. In the summary of the report, under what the school needs to do in order to improve, the key issues are listed. At the heart of these issues is the need to develop effectiveness and consistency in homework, class assemblies, in the use of assessment and in department's focus on and development of pupils' literacy skills. This will only be achieved if these aspects are monitored and evaluated consistently with rigour, initially at a senior level.
66. The special educational needs department is led effectively by the special educational needs co-ordinator. She provides an excellent role model in her caring approach to the pupils. She offers them high levels of individual support and is firmly committed to their personal and academic development. However, there is scope for her to take a stronger management role in co-ordinating the activities of the department. There is also a need for clearer procedures and tighter systems, especially in respect of data analysis and monitoring strategies in order to

judge the effectiveness of any strategies. There are clear guidelines for learning support assistants as to how support should be used in the classrooms and this has resulted in a good level of performance. The strategic role of the specialist 'English as an additional language' teacher could be developed more. There are issues relating to roles and subject responsibilities within Humanities and the overlap with aspects of the personal, social, citizenship and health education programme which need to be unravelled and clarified.

67. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified and new teachers are good. Leadership in this area is good because the post holder is very committed and has built successfully on existing procedures in her first year in post. She organises ongoing observation opportunities for new staff and graduate trainees, so that they can see a range of teaching and learning across the school, and witness classroom management strategies in operation in the different subject areas. The use of mentors and buddies support staff and also provide a clear reference point. Senior management play a key role in termly observations of all new staff.
68. Financial planning and control are good. The school plans prudently in a situation in which it is difficult to predict income due to fluctuating numbers of students. Strategic planning supports the school's drive to raise standards. The school development plan is carefully costed and the school is using extra funding, such as the Leadership Initiative Grant, effectively. The finance committee carefully monitors the annual budget. The school has taken effective action to implement the recommendations of the recent auditor's report. Day-to-day financial control is good. The school works hard to ensure that it gets value for money; however, its systems for evaluating major expenditure are not always rigorous enough. Its efforts in recent years to challenge its own performance have led to improving standards in most subjects. The school bursar monitors the work of service providers carefully and this has led to improvements, such as those in the quality of catering. The school consults effectively with students through its school council. While it is working hard to improve its communication with parents, it rightly sees this as an area for development.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,019,591	Balance from previous year	219,836
Total expenditure	2,901,989	Balance carried forward to the next	117,602
Expenditure per pupil	3,986		

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good vocational curriculum.
- Good leadership and management.
- It is well supported by very good careers education and guidance.
- There are teething administrative and curriculum problems for courses that are provided by the local college.
- There are missed opportunities for enterprise education across the curriculum.
- Good whole-school in-service training has not supported this new area of the curriculum.

Commentary

69. Work-related learning (WRL) is good, and is well co-ordinated by a committed teacher with knowledge and vision. The very good work experience, which includes the opportunity for extended placements, enables pupils to extend their work-related learning through direct experience. The last report stated that there were too few vocational courses but there has been very good improvement since then and this is no longer the case. The high quality vocational curriculum fosters knowledge and understanding about the world of work and particular skills, ranging from GCSE applied ICT to NVQ courses in electrical installation and catering. Pupils have been successfully launched on a possible career and a pathway to continuing education. Pupils' reaction to these courses is generally positive and the boys feel that they have become more focused. More than two-thirds of the students have passed all of their examinations so far. They are supported well by school staff, including a mentor.
70. Some of these courses are part of the 'Headstart' programme that is jointly run by the school and the local college. Timetabling and other administrative problems at the beginning of the academic year have caused confusion. The co-ordinator is aware of the need for rigorous monitoring and evaluation of these linked courses. A weakness is that the school's curriculum was not fine tuned to ensure that pupils on this programme were not disadvantaged in any way. For example, the current Year 11 pupils missed their PSHE lesson in Year 10 and all were required to take a graphics course at school. The WRL co-ordinator is working hard, negotiating a more flexible approach for this year. The school is aware of the issue and has appointed a new senior manager to implement change.
71. Work-related learning is enhanced by the high quality relationships within the school, which helps produce young adults with attitudes and skills that increase employability. Tasks and activities within the very good careers education and guidance programme also make a strong contribution. However, enterprise education across the school is inconsistent. Whilst some departments such as geography make very few links, others are more involved. Physical education makes good use of the real world and English organises pupils to produce a newspaper, helped by the local press. Enterprise education, in the sense of pupil initiative and responsibility for solving problems, has not yet been clearly highlighted in all schemes of work. That has been no whole-school in-service training to hone teachers' understanding of this new curriculum area. There are plans to introduce Young Enterprise companies.

Sixth form

72. Work-related learning is good. The school's curriculum and consortium arrangements with local educational institutions enable students to take a wide range of courses that prepare them well for the world of work and continuing education. Provision would be even better if there was access to entry qualification courses for a greater range of skills. A very good

careers education and guidance programme underpins work-related learning. Opportunities for enterprise through Young Enterprise activities and school and community projects also enhance this curriculum.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an improving trend in the standard of pupils' work and achievement is good.
- Pupils are achieving well because of the consistently good, and often very good teaching.
- Effective leadership and management, and the teachers' good teamwork, are raising standards.
- Pupils lack confidence and fluency when speaking in formal situations about their work.
- Many pupils' extended writing lacks structure and coherence.

Commentary

73. Standards in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well below average for boys and girls but this represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' low levels of attainment on entry to the school. The 2004 results were similar to those of 2003 but there was a significant improvement in the boys' performance. The proportion of pupils obtaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2003 GCSE English language examinations was below national averages for boys and girls but achievement was good. The most competent girls did particularly well, attaining the highest grades. Boys' literature results were below average but achievement was good. The girls' overall performance in the literature examinations was in line with national averages and their achievement in this subject was very good. Pupils with special educational needs achieved very well in their language examinations. The 2004 GCSE results were comparable with those of 2003 except for the performance of the boys, which improved significantly in English language.
74. The quality of the work seen during the course of the inspection confirms the improving trend in standards. There are still significant weaknesses in the structure and coherence of pupils' extended writing but there have been tangible improvements since the previous inspection in technical accuracy and the range of written work undertaken. Reading skills are more developed and the issues pupils reflect on in the course of that reading contribute to their moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils do talk about their work in small groups but they lack confidence and fluency in more formal situations. Their responses then are terse and hesitant. Pupils listen well and show respect for one another and the teacher. Standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening are below average by Year 11 but this represents good achievement considering pupils' low levels of attainment at the start of their secondary education. The work seen at the start of the Year 10 media studies course is in line with expectations for the course at this stage. Pupils are prepared well and are keen to succeed in this new course.
75. The quality of teaching is consistently good and at times very good and this is an improvement on the previous inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge, their lesson planning, their use of appropriate and varied teaching strategies, the strength of the working relationships they have established with the pupils, all help to explain the improving trend in results. Such strengths were also seen in the teaching of media studies. Teachers are addressing the areas of weakness in written work but strategies are not yet in place to give pupils confidence in the use of spoken English in different contexts. The department is aware of this and has it as a priority for development. Pupils behave and have positive attitudes to the subject. They progress well in lessons because they concentrate for long periods of time and they collaborate effectively in

group work. They take care with the presentation of their writing and use computers to help in the drafting process. The result is that the pace of learning is good.

76. Leadership and management are good. Well-managed teamwork has been a factor in securing the improvement in standards, particularly with the boys. There is a strong sense of common purpose and morale is high. Teachers monitor and review their work on a regular basis and good practice is shared. They have clear developmental priorities, including refining their use of electronic teaching aids. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in developing pupils' use of computers for learning and in guiding pupils on how to improve their work. Effective procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress over time and action is taken to acknowledge success and to address underachievement. There is the capacity for improving further on the already good provision because teachers are self-critical and are committed to on-going professional development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

77. Pupils enter the school with very weak literacy skills. They do not have a fluent command of written and spoken English and they cannot use the language flexibly in different contexts. The school has done much to address these weaknesses. Training in the teaching of literacy skills has been provided for the staff and this has resulted in areas of good practice. In science, pupils are encouraged to develop their ideas through discussion and they have a good command of specialist terms. They are also given opportunities to paraphrase scientific texts. Extensive use is made of technical vocabulary in design technology and pupils read a range of specialist texts with understanding. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to speak about their work in physical education. Students do improve their literacy skills to below national average standards by Year 11 because of such good practice but more could be achieved if there was a consistency of teaching practice across the curriculum.
78. There are curriculum areas where pupils are not encouraged to discuss their work. There are very few instances where they are given opportunities to evaluate one another's work. A start has been made in using this technique in geography and this is contributing to pupils' ability to use spoken English well. It is in its infancy as a teaching aid, however, and is not being used extensively elsewhere. Such inconsistencies in practice arise from an absence of a whole-school strategic approach to raising standards of literacy and oral work and the lack of a system for monitoring and evaluating provision. The school is aware of the need to be more rigorous in its approach to improvement and has it as a priority for development.

Modern foreign languages: French and German

Overall provision in **French and German** is **satisfactory** and improving.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average and achievement is good.
- There is some underachievement in Years 7 to 9.
- The department has very good resources.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Curriculum arrangements in Years 7 to 9 are not helping to raise standards.
- There are low numbers studying a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

79. GCSE results in 2003 were above average in French but below average in German. Students performed well in relation to the standard they achieved at the end of Year 9 though the numbers entered for the examination were very low. Results in 2004 were above average in

both languages though the numbers remain small. Results have improved from a very low base since the last inspection. Teacher assessments for Year 9 in 2004 indicate that standards were very low. However, these results were caused by staffing difficulties, now resolved.

80. In work seen during the inspection, standards were higher, though still well below average. Most students develop good pronunciation and are confident orally but rarely have the opportunity to produce extended speech. High-attaining pupils in Year 9 are beginning to understand and use tenses with the support of the teacher but rarely produce language independently. Low-attaining pupils are often confident orally but rarely produce language beyond simple sentences.
81. Achievement is satisfactory, overall, but is inconsistent. There is good, sometimes very good, achievement by students in Year 7 but also unsatisfactory achievement by some students in Year 9. Pupils with special needs and those for whom English is a second language make satisfactory but inconsistent progress, because much depends on the expectations of the teacher. Standards in Year 11 are at an average level in German. This represents good achievement by comparison with their attainment at the end of Year 9. Most students have a good grasp of the main tenses and produce accurate extended writing. Pupils' attitudes are almost always positive. The attitudes of low-attaining students are particularly good.
82. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, with examples of good and very good teaching. There is good teaching in Years 10 and 11. The working atmosphere in classrooms is usually good because teachers have good relationships with students and ensure that students show respect for one another. As a result, students feel secure about contributing in lessons. This explains their relatively high oral confidence and good pronunciation. Good planning with clear lesson targets and well-sequenced activities ensure that students consolidate vocabulary and develop skills in a structured way. The best lessons begin with lively activities, which revise previous learning and teachers explain targets in detail, relate them to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades so that students are clear about what is expected of them and know, by the end, what progress they have made. This is particularly the case in Years 10 and 11 where teachers have a very good knowledge of GCSE criteria. However, very few lessons have an effective review of learning. In Years 7 to 9, teachers are less secure in their understanding of National Curriculum levels. As a result, pupils do not understand what they have to do to improve the quality of their work.
83. The best lessons also have pace and challenge. However, in Years 7 to 9, teachers sometimes have low expectations of what students can achieve. In general, teachers do not use the language that they are studying – the target language – enough in lessons and pupils have few opportunities to be creative in their use of language. While some teachers are effective in developing pupils' literacy skills, there is no consistent approach within the department. Pupils' work is regularly assessed. Marking is thorough and encouraging, though sometimes too generous. There are good examples of teachers giving effective feedback to pupils about their work. This is done well in Years 10 and 11.
84. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department had to deal with a difficult situation in the previous academic year but has a clear vision of the way forward, which is supported by effective planning and good teamwork. There are good systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department, including the teaching. Staffing and accommodation are good. Resources are very good. Learning support, though generous, is not targeted effectively in Years 7 to 9. There is insufficient time in Year 9. The organisation of the option blocks goes some way to explaining why the numbers studying a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11 are so low. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are improving, although still below national figures.
- Standards at the end of Year 11 are well below national expectations.
- Teaching is good, overall; teachers are committed to helping their pupils to do well and relationships are very good.
- Teachers miss opportunities to assess and record pupils' progress in learning.
- The leadership and management of the department are sound. Good teamwork is helping to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Commentary

85. Standards in mathematics are below national expectations. Pupils' attainment in mathematics when they enter the school is well below average. Results in the national tests for Year 9 have been consistently well below the national average over several years. However, in 2003 and 2004, results improved although remaining below the 2003 national figures. When the results of casual arrivals to the school are excluded, the pupils' rate of progress at least matched that for schools with a similar starting point. The gap between boys' and girls' results closed in 2003 and in 2004. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were low in relation to national averages for both boys and girls but boys achieved less successfully than girls in mathematics. There was a seven per cent improvement in the 2004 mathematics results, with similar numbers of boys and girls achieving the higher GCSE grades. Able pupils do not necessarily gain grades as high as they should, partly because coursework marks are too low. The majority of pupils do not benefit from the early entry for GCSE mathematics. Pupils who have a home language other than English generally achieve well by the end of Year 11. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, overall.
86. Inspection evidence indicates that overall standards in the current Year 9 are improving and close to the national average. Achievement in lessons is generally at least in line with expectations and the work in the pupils' books, including that of those with special educational needs, reflects mostly good progress across the expected areas of mathematics. Many pupils have weak numerical skills when they enter the school and these are developed well across the early years, as is work on shape and space and data handling. Able pupils are quick to spot number and other patterns. Elementary graph drawing skills are sound, supported by the pupils' careful presentation of work. However, many pupils lack confidence in applying their skills to problem-solving, and the interpretation of word problems is a barrier to pupils in the middle and lower groups in particular. Many find it challenging to communicate reasons for answers either orally or in writing, partly as the result of undeveloped literacy and oral skills.
87. By the end of Year 11, pupils achieve less well than they should, overall. A contributory factor is the rushed coverage of the GCSE content because of the tradition of early entry for the examination at the end of Year 10. Data-handling projects are not well developed, with most pupils finding difficulty in sampling populations and analysing and interpreting the data. Work on investigative tasks fails to explain clearly how generalisations are obtained. Nevertheless, many pupils show appropriate levels of skills in manipulative algebra and data-handling, both in lessons and in their workbooks, but fail to apply the knowledge to unfamiliar situations.
88. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good, overall. Working relationships are very good and all teachers are committed to helping pupils achieve of their best. Pupils learn well because of the high expectations of teachers in Years 7 to 9. In GCSE classes, learning is supported by the pupils' conscientious attention to the presentation of their work but few are independent learners. Learning in lessons is better than that portrayed by the current GCSE results because pupils co-operate very well with their teachers and are willing to apply

themselves productively in lessons. The best lessons are carefully structured and provide a range of learning opportunities, as in a Year 8 lesson on the continuity of the number line, a Year 10 lesson on Pythagorean triples, and a Year 9 lesson on time that made good use of ICT resources. In other less effective lessons, teachers do not plan learning outcomes precisely enough and insufficient attention is given to assessing accurately what pupils have learned. Generally, pupils have too few opportunities to articulate their thinking, particularly in older year groups.

89. The use of day-to-day assessment in mathematics is satisfactory, overall, but requires some improvement. All teachers set homework regularly. Many pupils receive helpful and immediate oral feedback on their work in lessons and there are some examples of good quality diagnostic marking that enable pupils to improve their work. However, marking is sometimes unrelated to the pupils' targets and misses opportunities to ensure that errors and misunderstandings are revisited. Teachers' use of assessment information in planning lessons is inconsistent across the department and pupils' achievements in classwork and homework are not always analysed in enough detail to support future improvements.
90. The steady leadership of mathematics has encouraged a committed team approach that has mitigated some recent staffing challenges. The department is well managed, and day-to-day running is smooth. The department is benefiting from a planned training programme for the *National Framework for Mathematics* supported by the LEA. Since the last inspection, the department has made sound progress, improving the national test results at the end of Year 9 as well as the quality of teaching. However, much remains to be done to raise GCSE results through: reviewing the mathematics curriculum for Years 10 and 11; implementing planned activities to support the pupils' literacy skills; and developing further methods of in-class assessment.

Mathematics across the curriculum

91. There is good provision within mathematics to develop pupils' numeracy skills alongside other aspects of the subject. At whole-school level, staff training, together with the numeracy policy has laid the foundations for departments to integrate elements of numeracy into schemes of work. However, pupils have few opportunities to use these skills in other curriculum areas. In geography, pupils occasionally use pictorial representation to support their work. They use their estimating and measuring skills satisfactorily in design and technology and apply money calculations competently to fuel-costings, for example. In science, pupils manage simple calculations and graph work but sometimes fail to pay attention to details such as labelling axes. However, overall provision for mathematics across the curriculum is incidental rather than planned and is not yet monitored to evaluate any impact. Provision is unsatisfactory.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Senior science staff have worked hard to raise pupils' achievement in difficult circumstances.
- There has been underachievement at GCSE.
- A high proportion of teachers is unfamiliar with the English system of education.
- Assessment data is used well to improve pupils' achievement.
- Too few pupils take the GCSE double award in science.

Commentary

92. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE in 2003 were well below average. A major contributory factor was the high turnover of staff that disrupted curricular continuity. The science results were significantly less good than those in mathematics at GCSE suggesting underachievement. National test and GCSE results improved in 2004. Girls outperformed boys in the national tests and at GCSE in 2003 but in 2004 boys did equally well in the national tests. There were no A* or A grades at GCSE, suggesting that higher-attaining pupils were not being challenged enough. Ethnic-minority pupils did as well as other pupils.
93. Pupils' work seen during the inspection indicates that they will attain well below average standards by the end of Year 9. They can identify the states of matter and know that the movement of particles increases with increasing temperature but most find it difficult to explain, using correct scientific terms, why the expansion of matter reduces its density. Standards in the current Year 11 are higher than last year, with about one-third of pupils producing work likely to lead to a GCSE grade C or better. They can describe simple processes such as digestion but their grasp of scientific concepts is often insecure. Achievement is satisfactory in all years and for all abilities apart from gifted pupils who do not receive enough challenge in class. Achievement is aided by teachers who have high expectations of behaviour and attainment, pupils who are mainly co-operative and the presence of teaching assistants to help pupils with special educational needs. Achievement is handicapped by pupils' difficulty in retaining information previously taught, lessons that lack challenge, and the minority of pupils who lack motivation.
94. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The strengths include the development of pupils' literacy, the use of information from assessment to improve learning, the use of oral work to develop pupil's knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, the involvement of all pupils in questioning and references to science in everyday life that stimulates interest. Pupils learned well in a good Year 9 lesson where they were required to develop a plan for an investigation into the factors that affect gravitational pull. They were able to discuss ideas and write simple summaries before starting the practical activity. In another Year 9 lesson, on acids and alkalis, pupils learned very well due to the orderly atmosphere, the clear instructions that explained what they had to do, the requirement for them to record their observations in their own words and the attention paid to measuring accurately. Aspects that could be improved include the failure to ensure all pupils can see text or demonstrations clearly, lessons that proceed at too slow a pace to hold pupils' interest and an over-reliance on worksheets that reduce the requirement for pupils to think things through or do not take account of their ability to read,
95. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department and the curriculum co-ordinator for Years 7 to 9 have vision, drive and good working relationships. Both are good role models who support the new staff well. Monitoring, review and evaluation are strengths of the department that identifies underachievers, sets them targets and offers them subject-specific advice on how to improve. Staff training is readily available. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
96. The majority of teachers have recently been recruited from overseas and will need considerable support and a rapid introduction to the English education system if they are to fulfil their potential. Pupils' post-16 choices are restricted by the very low proportion of pupils that take the double award in science at GCSE. Extra-curricular activities, such as revision classes, booster lessons, a science club and a science fair help improve pupils' achievement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory** with good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are improving in all years following major investment in new equipment.
- Nearly all pupils now have timetabled ICT lessons from Year 7 to Year 11.

- Teaching is often good and courses are well managed.
- Pupils have good attitudes and behave well in lessons.
- The range of learning opportunities is underdeveloped in many other curriculum subjects though statutory requirements are met.

Commentary

97. Standards are below average in Years 7 to 9, but are rising due to significant investment in new computers, timetabled lessons for all pupils, and much good teaching. Standards on entry to the school are variable but well below average, overall. In 2002 and 2003, standards were well below average by the end of Year 9 in ICT but in 2004 have improved to just below average⁷. Girls perform better than boys, but the gap is narrowing. Pupils with special needs or with English as an additional language are well-integrated in lessons and make as much progress as other pupils. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is broadly satisfactory.
98. Nearly all pupils have timetabled ICT lessons in Years 10 and 11. Standards at the end of Year 11 on the GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses are broadly in line with national expectations, with an impressive 94 per cent gaining a C grade equivalent in 2004. This shows a rising trend from 2003, and for over a half of pupils, results were better than teachers predicted. Both girls and boys achieved well from the low levels at which they entered from Year 9. This successful outcome has helped to spearhead the school's move to a more relevant, vocational curriculum and has helped significantly to raise pupils' self-esteem and motivation. Overall, however, pupils' achievement by the end of Year 11 in ICT is satisfactory rather than good because several other curriculum subjects have not yet used recently installed ICT equipment to help raise achievement in their subjects by improving pupils' literacy and numeracy. During the inspection, few examples of ICT use were seen outside timetabled lessons. In a Year 10 history lesson, pupils searched for details about the holocaust effectively from a web site.
99. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, and often good, particularly in the Year 10 and 11 GNVQ lessons. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and work hard to ensure that individual needs are met with appropriate support. Learning support is used well in lower years to ensure that pupils with special needs make as much progress as they can. Pupils of different ethnic groups support each other well, and, in lessons, pupils are well motivated, behave well and take good interest in their work. Two technically advanced power point presentations by gifted Year 11 boys are being used as exemplars for sixth form work.
100. Leadership and management of the subject are good, overall, and, since the appointment of a very committed new faculty co-ordinator in 2002, timetabled lessons, equipment, and schemes of work have been greatly improved. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are good for GNVQ pupils, who readily know how they are doing, and a new system has just been put in place for the lower school. The hard-working and enthusiastic staff team now numbers eight, and is establishing a good culture of learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

101. ICT use across curriculum subjects is well co-ordinated, and meets statutory requirements, but further development of Programmes of Study and their assessment within subjects is required to develop pupils' skills. Pupils are competent in applying computer skills, as nearly all have timetabled vocational ICT lessons in Year 10 and 11, which provide a good basis for applying the most important skills in developing and exchanging ideas and handling information. In several subjects, pupils are developing competence using a range of ICT applications to extend subject knowledge, for example, by researching World War II on the Internet (history) and presenting coursework (mathematics and science). The availability of

⁷ National comparable data for 2004 is not yet available, 2003 data is used to make the judgement.

computers for subjects has recently improved significantly. Several subjects plan to use ICT to improve pupils' achievement with new equipment, for example, mathematics (graphic calculators) and modern languages. New CAD/CAM software is being introduced shortly in design and technology and art. ICT is used well in applied business to raise achievement, particularly in boys' coursework. Year 7 pupils with special educational needs make good use of 'SuccessMaker'⁸, and careers staff ensure pupils make particularly good use of ICT to communicate and share information.

HUMANITIES

102. The subjects and courses of geography, history, humanities, religious education and citizenship are included in the responsibilities of the head of humanities. However, subject teachers take some responsibility for individual subjects. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. Continuity has been established in all subjects and courses in Years 7 to 9 so that pupils build their skills upon previous learning. The quality of teaching has improved. In Years 10 to 11, all pupils take a course of humanities, which includes citizenship and religious education; some pupils also opt for history. This arrangement does not fully meet requirements for citizenship provides a basic entitlement to religious education in those years. Lack of detail in the schemes of work means that the overt teaching of religious education is open to individual teacher interpretation. The day-to-day leadership and management of the humanities are satisfactory. However, the roles and responsibilities within the area are ill defined and this has led to issues of only partial compliance with statutory requirements in citizenship.

The citizenship report is included at the end of the subject reports.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong and appropriate relationships between teachers and their pupils contribute to the pupils' positive attitudes to learning.
- The brisk, positive teaching that engages and enthuses pupils.
- The effective use of computers to interest and challenge pupils in their work.
- The increasing use of effective methods to promote pupils' speaking and writing skills.
- Pupils do not take full responsibility for their learning.

Commentary

103. Teachers know their pupils well and build trusting and reliable learning relationships. Because of this, pupils of all abilities are interested in their learning and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs are enthusiastic about their learning and also achieve well. Pupils frequently engage the teacher in conversation at the beginning of lessons, relating relevant things they have encountered since the previous lesson. The brisk pace and timing of lessons helps pupils gain confidence and increases expectations of achievement. In Year 9, pupils are thrilled at the video clip of volcanic eruptions, which through the very effective use of ICT, is used to focus pupils' attention.
104. The published assessments by teachers in Year 9 in 2004 indicate that standards are below those expected. This is due to the low level of language skills of the pupils. Effective use is being made of strategies to promote writing and spoken work. Year 9 pupils extend their geographical vocabulary by attaching adjectives to describe part of the process of a volcanic

⁸ Successmaker is a program designed to develop literacy and numeracy skills.

eruption. Pupils are given opportunities for recording information in varied ways and are expected to assess and criticise the work of others. In Year 8, pupils begin to classify the possible long- and short-term effects of flooding in Cornwall, again though the effective use of computer-controlled video footage. Good teaching and learning was observed during the inspection, however; teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall, because many of the strategies have yet to have significant impact on standards.

105. Pupils are not sufficiently independent in their learning. Assessment, which is beginning to be used to improve achievement, is not yet used effectively enough to enable pupils to recognise what they have learnt and what they need to do to improve. The final part of lessons is often rushed and so pupils are not given sufficient time to reflect upon what they have learnt. The setting of homework is again rushed and its significance in promoting high standards is not always appreciated by the pupils. The satisfactory leadership and management of geography have fostered significant improvement since the last inspection and are helping to raise standards.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well throughout the school from a low start because of good teaching and learning.
- By the end of Year 9 standards are close to national averages because of the good provision.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning developed through the good relationships with staff.
- A strong specialist team has been effective in improving teaching and learning and raising achievement.
- The lack of formal teaching of history and information and communication technology.
- Marking and assessment are not consistent enough to monitor pupils' progress and achievement effectively.
- History is not being taught to Year 10 as an option.

Commentary

106. GCSE examination results remain below the national standards, though there is a continued upward trend. There has been a significant reduction in numbers of pupils taking history as a GCSE examination since the last inspection. Girls do better than boys in the examinations. Weak writing skills are a handicap to high grades. Achievement is good in relation to their prior attainment. Girls and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, who speak English as an additional language do particularly well. Those who have special educational needs are also achieving well because of effective teaching support given in smaller groups.
107. By Year 9, pupils achieve national standards. In work seen and lessons observed, it is evident that pupils demonstrate a sound sense of chronology and improving historical skills of enquiry, questioning of sources and interpretation. For example, a group of lower ability pupils in Year 9 demonstrated how historians use historical language to interpret and analyse events of the past. In Year 11, students build on their previous knowledge and understanding to cover the examination syllabus. They use language accurately most of the time and interpret and evaluate how historians reach different conclusions. They question historical sources effectively to extract and use information to identify reasons and explain events very well.
108. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Teachers have a good command of their subject and they use a variety of effective teaching styles, which enable pupils to acquire new historical knowledge and to deepen their understanding. Their detailed planning is closely linked to the scheme of work and they use the Key Stage 3 Strategy well. They teach historical terminology

and skills systematically and cover examination requirements well. They provide effective challenge, coupled with high expectations both of behaviour and standards of work. There is a brisk pace and good ongoing assessment with valuable links made with literacy. However, there are insufficient links made with numeracy and citizenship. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, assessment, is not always rigorous especially in non-examination years and is not always linked to the National Curriculum criteria. The lack of direct teaching of history and information and communication technology reduces opportunities to build pupils' skills further. Nevertheless, pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning; they collaborate well and contribute actively to their own learning, and their progress is good as a result.

109. Leadership and management are both good. The subject leader is enthusiastic, but the subject's development is inhibited by the lack of opportunity for history as a discrete subject at GCSE except within the wider humanities option. There is a very good teamwork and good relationships providing good role models for pupils. The team understands the limitations of accommodation and make effective use of it. The main issues of the last inspection have been addressed well. The scheme of work provides a good framework for helping development of historical skills; teachers are skilled specialists but there continues to be a lack of higher grades because pupils do little extended writing and targets for individual pupils need to be sharper to meet their specific needs.

Humanities

Provision in humanities is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving at GCSE.
- There is a high quality of relationships between teachers and pupils that helps pupils to achieve well in relation to their previous standards.
- There is an insufficient range of books and other printed material to encourage pupils to read, given the very wide range of reading abilities of the pupils.
- Pupils are not sufficiently helped to become independent learners.

Commentary

110. Standards of attainment at GCSE in 2003 were below those expected nationally. This was because of the low level of language skills of the pupils. There was also a significant number of pupils at the lower levels of attainment. However, results in 2004 showed improvement at the higher levels. This is a result of the confident and effective teaching that allows positive and productive relationships to be established between staff and pupils. These help pupils to enjoy their lessons and achieve well.
111. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, although mainly good teaching was observed during the inspection. Good use is made of ICT to show video clips, which are focused so that the pupils recognised particular issues relating to clashes of cultural traditions faced by Muslim people in a working class area in England. The effective teaching encourages pupils to use their knowledge of 'stereotyping' in order to understand the pressures in Germany in the 1930s, which led to the persecution of the Jews. Pupils are attentive and interested in their learning because of the calm persistence of the teaching.
112. Teaching relies heavily on internally produced learning materials and this provides too limited a range of reading texts for pupils of differing abilities. Lower-attaining pupils with poor reading skills are not sufficiently helped by these. The shortage of lively texts means that pupils are not encouraged to make decisions about their reading choices on given topics. They are given sufficient opportunity to use their language skills in collecting information. This does not help pupils to become independent in their learning. Expectations and

standards of homework required are not always made clear to pupils and, again, pupils are not helped to manage their own workload. Assessments are not used effectively to help pupils understand what they know and what they need to do to improve.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards are close to expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus at the end of Year 9, and pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 in relation to their prior attainment.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good.
- Religious education contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship, but that is not made explicit.
- Pupils receive a basic entitlement to religious education within the humanities course but, because schemes of work lack detail, it is subject to individual teacher interpretation as to whether it is taught as a discrete unit required by the locally Agreed Syllabus. Religious education is not offered as a separate examination subject. Previous results in years 1999 and 2000 showed that those who took Short Course religious education did relatively well.
- Marking and assessments remain inconsistent.
- The school does not take full advantage of its multi-religious community to raise standards, to further enhance pupils' self-esteem and develop closer links with families.

Commentary

113. Standards in Year 9 meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This represents good achievement in relation to their prior ability. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and girls do particularly well. Pupils with special needs achieve well in relation to their earlier learning. Pupils gain a sound understanding of the beliefs, practices and insights of religions, though their standards of written work hold them back. They recognise and appreciate the teaching of inspirational figures such as Mother Teresa and relate to them well.
114. There is no specialist GCSE Religious Studies Course and religious education is covered through the Humanities GCSE, which is being reported separately. Pupils receive a religious education entitlement in Years 10 and 11 but schemes of work lack detail and it is subject to individual teacher interpretation as to whether it is taught as a discrete unit required by the locally Agreed Syllabus. Previous results show that those who took examinations in Short Course Religious Studies did well and the numbers were significant.
115. The quality of teaching is sound, overall, though some good teaching was seen in some of the lessons observed. High expectations of behaviour coupled with the teachers' good relationships with pupils are enabling pupils to achieve and to make progress. In classes, it was evident that the teachers try to develop the skills of learning from religion and learning about religion in an effective way and they plan their lessons well. Teachers help pupils to learn to respect the feelings and beliefs of one another and to have opportunities for personal development. Religious education contributes to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, though no explicit links are made to citizenship. An analysis of pupils' work shows further that teachers are not sufficiently secure in their own understanding of world religions, except Christianity, and that factual accuracy is not therefore consistently assured. Similarly marking and assessments do not sufficiently link well with the attainment levels in the Agreed Syllabus.
116. Pupils visit places of religious interest, such as local churches, the mosque, the Peace Pagoda at Milton Keynes and the Hindu Temple during Years 7 to 9, but limited use is made of

the local community especially those who have other than Christian backgrounds, though a Hindu parent helped with a trip to the Neasden Temple. There are pupils in the school from Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Zoroastrian backgrounds; insufficient opportunities are taken to involve visitors or parents from these communities in religious education.

117. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The subject is taught by teachers in the humanities department and the scheme lacks sufficient detail. Resources for the subject, such as textbooks, worksheets, posters, artefacts and pictures, are barely adequate. Since the last inspection, provision for Years 7 to 9 is better and the Key Stage 3 Strategy is providing a better structure for developing literacy skills. Schemes of work continue to require sharper focus and closer compliance with the Agreed Syllabus, particularly for Years 10 and 11.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good, overall, and excellent for those following the GCSE course in child development.
- The standard of teaching is good, overall, with some very good and excellent practice.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good because of a mutually supportive team ethos.
- Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is too harsh.
- There are not yet enough opportunities provided for pupils to use computer-aided design and manufacture. (CAD/CAM).

Commentary

118. Achievement is good by the end of Year 9 because standards on entry in Year 7 are well below average and by the end of Year 9 standards are just below average. The girls do better than the boys. The higher-attaining pupils achieve higher standards because they can express their ideas through good annotated sketches and are perceptive when testing and investigating familiar products. For example, when pupils begin to develop their knowledge and understanding of pastry products, they are able to identify the more healthy options. Pupils' motivation in graphics projects is also good, for example, when they design food cartons. The progress made by lower-attaining pupils is good because of the well-targeted support they receive from dedicated teaching assistants.
119. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. Overall, standards in the range of design technology GCSE courses offered in 2003 were well below the national average. They were higher in GCSE Child Development, which is a very popular course for the girls. Inspection evidence indicates that although standards are still below average, they are improving as indicated in the 2004 results. There are some stunning pieces of pupils' coursework; for example, in textiles where bags and garments are made to exacting standards. Year-on-year there has been a steady improvement in examination results. Pupils generally perform better in design and technology than they do in their other subjects.
120. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with many lessons being very good and excellent. In the most effective lessons teachers' preparation and classroom management are very good. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and a passion for their subject, which is used effectively to motivate their pupils. They generally use skilful, well-targeted question and answer sessions, keeping the pace of the lesson brisk with no time wasted. Pupils' learning is

supported well with high quality workbooks and structured design folios. Pupils receive constructive comment on their work from teachers and therefore understand what they need to do to improve.

121. Leadership and management are good. The head of the department has developed a mutually supportive team approach, which contributes well to the department's successful development. She is well aware of areas in need of improvement and systems are in place to further raise pupils' attainment. There has been good progress made since the last inspection. The department continues to build on its strengths and steadily improves, for example, by now offering GCSE Catering, which is better suited to pupils' needs. Plans are currently being implemented to improve the currently inadequate provision for CAD/CAM.
122. A food area has recently been refurbished to a high standard, but for pupils following the very successful GCSE Child Development course, there is no dedicated working space. A committed technician team provide support that has a positive impact on standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Provision in art is **good** with some very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Improvements since the last inspection are very good.
- Standards, overall, are well above the national average by the end of Year 11. The 2004 GCSE results were outstanding.
- Students' achievement is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory, predominantly very good, and there is some excellent teaching.
- ICT provision and the use of computer-aided design are underdeveloped; further resources are needed.
- Curriculum time in Years 7 and 8 is insufficient.

Commentary

123. The department offers a good range of aspects of art and design and contextual studies in all years, including the use of a wide range of media, and work in two and three dimensions.
124. In a Year 7 colour theory lesson seen, pupils wrote down what they have learnt about colour. Pupils mixed a wide range of colours, using poster paint in the three primary colours; most understood how secondary colours are obtained, and several pupils created subtle colour harmonies using tints and shades. Year 8 pupils talked confidently and critically about reproductions of well-known abstract works by Picasso and Braque. Higher-attaining pupils readily assisted the less able. A less well motivated, lower-attaining group of Year 9 pupils, many with special needs, made collages using magazine cuttings. Standards of letter shapes, colour selection and tonal contrast, were lower than expected. There is a wide range of attainment in the first three years, with some excellent sketch-book work by several gifted and talented pupils. By the end of Year 9, overall standards are in line with national expectation. Pupils' achievement is good, overall, in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils are working to their individual capabilities.

125. There has been a significant increase in standards and GCSE examination results since 2003. Results have risen from below average to very good in 2004. The number of A* to C grades being well above the national average. Boys' achievement has also improved, with schemes of work and lesson presentation adjusted to match male aspirations and interests. Departmental predictions are, again, for above-average results, overall, in 2005.
126. Year 10 pupils working on a Cubism and Pop-art project, made line drawing copies of well-known artists' work, and completed these using acrylic colours. They tried hard to replicate the styles of the artists, and then developed a composition of their own in the artists' style, based on a still-life drawing they had done for homework. Working in a range of media and style Year 11 pupils produced very original ideas for the theme 'natures' construction'. The strengths of finished projects were: rich pattern quality and the use of exciting colour combinations. Less good was the diversity of approach, composition and the standard of direct observational drawing. Year 11 sketch-books, from the previous year, indicate that there is very good progress through the two-year course, with good productivity, and a higher standard of presentation towards the end of Year 11. There is evidence of this in a final project – 'towards abstraction', where pupils have studied and used the styles, techniques and objectives of such artists as, *Leger*, *O'Keeffe*, and *Rousseau*, to very good effect in artworks of their own.
127. Teaching and learning is predominantly very good, with some satisfactory and excellent teaching. Teachers have very good command of their subject. They set exciting, challenging tasks and have high expectations of students. They are very enthusiastic, good role models, giving very generously of their time to pupils at all attainment levels. Excellent working relationships have been established. Areas for further development in a minority of lessons are greater use of question and answer sessions in lesson introductions and plenary sessions, and some aspects of control in a small number of Year 9 lessons. In these lessons, where lesson presentation and choice of topic is not entirely appropriate, there is some underachievement, mainly by boys. Usually subject matter and presentation are fully inclusive, with pupils across the wide spectrum of attainment benefiting from 'open-ended' practical tasks, but literacy, numeracy and ICT links are insufficiently integrated in some lessons. Paired work for critical studies, and self-assessment make a good contribution to pupils' learning in the best lessons. Target-setting and the use of National Curriculum levels in assessment helps pupils to understand how well they are doing.
128. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by extra-curricular opportunities, such as artists in residence, workshops, and gallery visits. Pupils generally have very good attitudes and work purposefully and productively, both in lessons and independently. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. High quality wall displays of pupils' work are inspirational, informative, and provide a stimulating environment in the art rooms and around the school.
129. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is clarity of vision, and a strong sense of purpose. Development plans address the important issues. However, the lack of ICT and computer-aided design work is worrying, as the art department could contribute significantly to Business and Enterprise education through these areas. Progress since the previous inspection is impressive, standards of work, teaching and learning, and schemes of work have all improved. The issues about lack of three-dimensional work and curriculum mapping have been resolved, but curriculum time continues to be low in Years 7 and 8. The development of ICT resources and provision for computer-aided design are long overdue.
130. **Dance** was sampled.
131. Leadership in this area is good because the postholder has a passionate commitment to this area and has built successfully on existing practice in her first year in post.

132. GCSE Dance is taught as an after-school activity, with viable groups of girls drawn from Years 10 and 11. Teaching is lively and dynamic and draws on the extensive experience of the dance teacher. Relationships are good and lead to some focused work, with many opportunities for support and improvement. Pupils attend two sessions per week totalling three hours, and attendance is good. The pupils show interest and maintain their efforts, through the enthusiasm of the teacher, for the duration of the class. A sixth form student, who has recently taken the GCSE course, supports the Year 11 group. The physical education department teaches dance in Years 7 to 9 as part of its Programme of Study and this provides a foundation for the examination work.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is consistent good quality teaching.
- Pupils achieve well and attain standards close to the national average.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to developing pupils' oral skills and to their sense of self-esteem. The subject could make a greater contribution to developing skills in reading and writing.
- The curriculum is enriched by the extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

133. Pupils achieve well in drama. The numbers taking the examination are relatively small and, therefore, comparison with national averages is problematic because the performance of one pupil can make a significant difference to overall percentages and the composition of the group varies from year-to-year. About half gain A* to C grades – below the national average of 65 per cent. In 2003, the average grade was the equivalent to a low grade D compared with a high grade D nationally. According to the school's analysis, pupils do better in drama than almost all other subjects in the school. Comparison of examination results to the previous report indicate a drop in the overall percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades, but this is the result of changes in the relative weighting given to practical work that existed then, rather than any drop in overall standards.
134. Standards of practical work seen in Years 10 and 11 were in line with course expectations. Written work is below average as pupils have difficulty in expressing their ideas. Given the increased weighting of written work, the department is developing this aspect as part of the lower school drama course. The subject is taught in a very inclusive way so that boys and girls, higher-attaining pupils and pupils with additional needs are implicitly challenged by the work and make equally good progress. Discontinuities caused by poor attendance of a minority of pupils and the changed college arrangements for the link course that are currently causing problems handicap achievement.
135. The key factor why the overall provision is good rests with the high quality of teaching, which is at least consistently good, and sometimes better. Two teachers teach almost all drama across the school. (There is a third teacher, new to the subject, who is being given very good support.) They have very good subject knowledge and expertise, establish very good relationships and clearly have high expectations in their demands of pupils and in establishing the necessary rigour and disciplines of the subject. They bring complementary skills to the department. One teacher, although unqualified, has an extensive professional theatre background whilst the head of department has an in-depth knowledge of the role of drama within education and the examination demands of the subject. The inspection took place very early in the academic year and routines were being re-established. However, the impact of good quality teaching over time, along with the quality of what was taught, was evident in the

qualitative difference between older and younger year groups. For example, Year 11 approached their work with considerably more maturity, independence and sensitivity than Year 10 embarking on their course. The course structure and the units of work clearly not only develop pupils' drama and theatrical skills but also help, through the practical work, to unlock difficult and challenging moral and ethical concepts. The title of one unit of work, for example, '*From Antigone to Rosa Parkes*', illustrates the department pitching the work at a demanding level and drawing on, and feeding, pupils' ideas drawn from sources beyond pupils' relatively limited dramatic experience and challenging the 'TV-soap' style conflict, which they can so easily drop into. The subject therefore makes a good contribution to the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, citizenship, cultural and personal development.

136. The department has also just introduced a vocational course in Year 10. This will require close on-going monitoring to ensure that there are the appropriate vocational opportunities, either simulated or real, and necessary resources to underpin it over time – particularly when there are two years of the course in operation.
137. Overall, the leadership of the department is good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in that standards have been maintained and the department has grown in size and in the range of courses offered for 14 to 19 pupils and students. The department is in a period of transition and the links to the arts are rightly being reinforced whilst, currently, maintaining close links with the English department. Having to face both ways is helpful to the department in maintaining the balance between developing skills in drama and using drama skills to explore and reinforce the approach to issues and human dilemmas being explored in English and the literature they are studying. The department makes a good contribution to the school's overall curriculum enrichment through the productions and theatre trips it operates. A key feature of the work of the department is that pupils gain a considerable sense of personal success and the subject is very successful in enhancing pupils' sense of self-esteem.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have a good range of musical opportunities and have access to both music and music technology courses.
- Teachers have very good expertise, particularly in the fields of singing and music technology.
- Relationships with pupils are good and pupils' attitude and behaviour assist their learning.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to take a more independent role in the learning process that affects their attainment.
- Assessment procedures are in place, but there is some inconsistency in record keeping and target-setting.

Commentary

138. A small number of students opt for the GCSE course and all have recently achieved high grades. Results are consistently well above national averages. A new BTEC course has now been introduced for Year 10 students. An AS Music Technology course has been introduced into the sixth form, attracting nine students; all gained pass grades and six gained grades B and C in 2004.
139. Students make very good progress in Years 7 to 9 and, as a result, standards are good in performing and composing by the end of Year 9, although students have difficulty in describing musical processes for the written part of the course. Standards of practical work are similarly good in Years 10 and 11 but are below average for listening and appraising. Sixth form students produce a good standard of work in music technology.

140. Teachers have very good subject skills, particularly in singing and music technology. Planning is sound and lessons are balanced well with a good range of activities. However, opportunities are missed for students to reflect and respond to music both orally and in writing. This reduces the otherwise high level of challenge that is evident in practical activities.
141. There is a good range of additional musical opportunities. Sixty students take instrumental lessons through a subsidised tuition scheme and approaching sixty take part in extra-curricular activities. The performing arts – dance, drama and music – come together annually for a school production involving a further fifty students.
142. The department is well led and managed, with appropriate aims and objectives. Staff work collaboratively and use their individual areas of expertise to the full advantage of students. Schemes of work are clear and planning is good. One example of good planning is the use of GCSE pupils' recorded compositions and performances as listening material for younger pupils, so that they can understand where their lessons are leading. Assessment procedures are in place but record keeping and target-setting are not yet consistently applied. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good with the development of new courses, together with above average examination results.
143. Curriculum time for music in Years 7 to 9 remains low, which inhibits composing work. Accommodation is just sufficient for current needs, although resources have improved considerably since the last inspection, especially in the area of music technology.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is strong leadership from the head of department.
- Teaching is good across the department, so that pupils achieve well.
- Standards, especially in relation to GCSE results, are rising.
- Assessment for learning through diagnostic feedback to help pupils know what they need to do to improve, including more differentiated teaching, needs to be improved.
- Teaching all four strands of the National Curriculum Programme of Study.

Commentary

144. Standards across the school are satisfactory, with boys attaining higher standards than girls. Recruitment to the GCSE courses is heavily in favour of boys, who perform well in the practical aspects of the course. Poor standards in literacy limit the theoretical work. Standards in GCSE are well above the national average, with Year 9 teacher assessments at Level 5+ improving as strategies have been put in place to moderate and provide more rigour to the process. The blocking of learning into 12 successive lessons in any one sport is helping to focus the pupils' attention and to provide a clear pathway for progression. Summary assessment is good, but a greater emphasis needs to be placed on clear, diagnostic feedback to individuals so that they know what they need to do to improve.
145. Teaching and learning are good across the department. All teachers plan well, using the three-part lesson of the Key Stage 3 strategy, and learning is delivered in clear sections, with well-led plenaries so that the pupils' learning is continually being reinforced and checked. The emphasis in lessons on speaking and listening makes a strong contribution to literacy. The warm, friendly relationships between staff and pupils, linked with positive affirmation, make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development. The main emphasis in teaching is on acquiring and developing skills. Knowledge and understanding of health-related fitness is

weak. There is a health-related fitness component within the scheme of work but general awareness, and the ability to link with other subjects, especially science, is underdeveloped. Emphasis on this area will raise the standards within the theory components of the GCSE course. Few opportunities exist for evaluation of their own or others' performance. Demonstration and plenaries can provide good opportunities for the development of this skill.

146. Leadership of the department is very good, with good procedures and practices established over the past three years since taking up post. A good, united team has been developed of young, enthusiastic and committed teachers who have a strong role model in the head of department. The use of frequent and focused observation within the department has helped to raise standards in teaching. A clear development plan, linked closely to the aims of the school, steers the department towards improvement and sets out a strategic vision. Innovations in the form of blocks of teaching in the different sports, moderation of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments and the establishment of base-line testing for Year 7 have led to improvements across the department.
147. The organisation of the classes into small teaching groups is an aid to learning as teachers can focus on individuals. Accommodation is limited with only one clear indoor teaching space. Use is made of the main school hall but access is becoming limited with the rise in assessed testing and examinations. The school is awaiting the result of a NOF bid to improve the changing rooms. GCSE classes do not have access to a discrete room for their theory lessons, so use of ICT is limited as equipment has to be moved into different classrooms when required, and there are no opportunities for display, which would contribute to raising the quality of the pupils' written work.
148. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Statutory requirements are now met; teaching has improved; standards are rising; the range of provision has been extended; achievement has improved, as have levels of participation.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

Provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is well planned; it usually, but not always, matches pupils' needs.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and help them achieve satisfactorily.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work and behave well.
- Links with local businesses are underdeveloped.

Commentary

149. Until this year, some pupils in Years 10 and 11 opted to study GCSE business and communications studies. Results were very low in 2003, with only half the group gaining A*-G grades but results reflected pupils' low standards on entry. Several had special educational needs. A new applied (vocational) GCSE course was introduced last year. Whilst standards are still below national expectations for A*-C grades they show improvement. Overall, achievement is satisfactory; girls achieve more highly than boys, but the gap is beginning to narrow.
150. Teaching was satisfactory in the two lessons seen during the inspection, and had several good features. Teachers created good relationships with pupils, including those with special educational needs, and had good subject knowledge. They systematically built up pupils'

knowledge and understanding of basic business concepts through class and homework tasks. In a Year 10 class, the difference between sole traders and partnerships was well understood. At times extra challenges for higher-attaining pupils, such as problem-solving exercises, were not given, because topics such as cash flow, in a Year 11 class, were taught in isolation and not related to previous learning. Some homework tasks were too easy for higher-attaining pupils.

151. Pupils generally know how well they are doing because homework is marked regularly and pupils are given the chance to improve assessed coursework. This helped pupils develop good attitudes and behave well, and pupils from different ethnic groups worked well together. Some tended to lose concentration towards the end because there were not enough opportunities for them to create their own business ideas. Occasionally, teachers missed opportunities to extend pupils' key communication and numeracy skills. When using ICT for tasks, most showed a willingness to work on their own to meet required deadlines and present their work well; their progress was well monitored by teachers.
152. Business lessons are well managed and the school plans to provide lessons in business and enterprise for all pupils. An effective link has been forged with a national electrical retailer. There is scope for more partnerships with local businesses for visits and speakers into school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

153. No teaching of PSHCE was seen and therefore it was not possible to make overall judgements about provision.
154. It was not possible to see any PSHCE lessons during the week of the inspection. However, a discussion with the co-ordinator and an examination of planning and other school documentation indicates that the main topics are covered in weekly classes, taken by all pupils. Interviews with pupils and a scrutiny of their work show that pupils are taught about drug misuse and sex and relationships. A number of other topics, such as health and racism, are covered and a focus on self-awareness forms a good basis for careers education and guidance. Generally, pupils have positive views about their relationship with their teacher and this underpins the discussions that occur but the quality of written work is often poor. There are a number of factors that hinder the delivery of a good PSHCE programme. One of the most important is the lack of time in a fifty-minute lesson that also delivers citizenship and careers education and guidance. Pupils also work on their Progress File in this slot.
155. Aspects of leadership and management that require development compound the time problem. The schemes of work for PSHCE are too simplistic. Although a new or supply teacher would be supported by the Year Heads, who play a major role in the delivery of PSHCE, the schemes of work give insufficient detail to be really helpful. There is too little reference to specific learning outcomes and a wide range of teaching and learning strategies. There are also limited references to resources, including the use of media and visitors; great reliance is placed on the use of one textbook. Opportunities for assessment, such as self-review, are not pinpointed methodically.
156. The school has not yet organised a coherent approach to the delivery of PSHCE that would encompass and consolidate all aspects. The PSHCE co-ordinator does not meet the co-ordinators for CEG, citizenship and the Progress File to plan and deliver a holistic curriculum. There are no specific references to work-related learning, including enterprise, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Although form tutors meet on a regular basis to discuss the PSHCE programme there has been little whole-school in-service training to highlight good practice at a time of curriculum change. This is particularly important as each tutor delivers the PSHCE programme. No review of the effectiveness of this arrangement has been undertaken.

Citizenship

No teaching of citizenship was seen and therefore it was not possible to make overall judgements about provision.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The newly appointed co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and understands the curricular issues involved.
- Form tutors deliver the course through PHSCE. This makes monitoring and the assurance of coverage difficult to administer.
- The programme of practical and involving activities is weak and uncoordinated and does not sufficiently build pupils confidence and skills.
- The scheme of work in Years 10 to 11 does not fully meet statutory requirements.

Commentary

157. No lessons were observed during the inspection. However, from teacher's planning and discussions with the co-ordinator, there are significant weaknesses in the provision. The newly appointed co-ordinator has devised a course for Years 7 to 9 which meets requirements for knowledge and understanding and research, but it does not develop practical skills sufficiently. This course is difficult to monitor by the co-ordinator, because many teachers are involved as it is taught as part of a full PHSCE programme. In Years 10 to 11 there is no specific programme, other than GCSE Humanities. Although this contributes to, it does not fully meet the statutory requirements.
158. The course has limited impact. It is managed within humanities, but with some overlap with the work of Year tutors in Years 7 to 9. Other subjects nominally identify supportive activities. As a result, pupils in Year 9 and Year 11 do not recognise their course of citizenship. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because the role and the responsibilities of the co-ordinator within the school are unclear.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, five subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003. Subjects that had single entries, apart from the subjects inspected, are not included.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	100	80.1	100	23.7	55	29.9
Drama	5	60	96.5	40	19.6	28	30.6
English literature	5	40	85.9	0	19.1	10	30.2
Design technology	3	100	74.9	0	15.1	26.7	25.3
Other social sciences	3	66.7	69.7	66.7	16.7	36.7	24.1
Sociology	2	100	71.8	0	18.4	25	25.4

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English	4	100	99.5	25	46.5	80	86.5
Art and design	1	100	98.6	100	50.2	100	87.7
Sociology	4	100	98.2	50	44.3	85	83.6
Design technology	2	100	97.8	0	35	70	77.9
Business	15	73.3	65	13.3	14.6	49.3	60.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and students' levels of achievement are good.
- Students achieve well because of the good teaching and their own positive attitudes to learning.
- Students are not reading widely to inform their thinking on the set texts.

Commentary

159. English literature is taught as a one year Advanced Supplementary course and as an Advanced level course over two years. The subject is popular with male and female students from Adeyfield and one of the consortium schools. A media studies course is offered as a one-year vocational course.

160. All students who entered the 2003 Advanced level examinations passed. The numbers involved were small, however, and so national comparisons and analysis by gender or group are inappropriate. The achievement of the students was satisfactory. The results in the Advanced Supplementary examinations that year were in line with national expectations and achievement was satisfactory. There was a significant improvement in results in both examinations in 2004 and achievement of male and female students was good. Students in media studies attained at expected levels and their achievement was also good.
161. The quality of the work seen during the course of the inspection reflects the improved standards attained in the recent examinations. Students have good analytical skills by Year 13 and have developed a mature, independent response to literature. They are confident in their use of the language of literary criticism but they are not reading widely, particularly the works of critics, to inform their thinking on the set texts. The standard of work seen of the small number of Year 13 students is in line with national averages. Their levels of achievement are good. The Year 12 students are adapting well to the disciplines of sixth form study in this second week of the one-year course. Numbers are high and students are well motivated. There has also been a good start to the Year 12 media studies course because the quality of the work seen was of a high standard.
162. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and they understand the learning needs of young men and women whom they know well and respect. This, together with the excellent working relationships, engenders confidence and high aspirations in the students. Teachers have the ability to put across their own enthusiasm for the subject and to motivate students to become independent and self-reliant in their studies. The evaluation of students' work is done thoroughly and constructive advice given on how to improve. Students speak highly of the support and guidance they receive.
163. There is good leadership and management of the subject by the head of department, who is well supported by able and committed teachers. They work closely as a team and have high aspirations for the students. There is a strong sense of common purpose and a commitment to improve further the quality of provision. Effective systems are in place for evaluating the subject's performance, for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for evaluating students' progress over time. There have been good improvements since the time of the previous inspection, particularly in terms of the proportion of students now working at grades A and B standard in the Advanced level course.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

164. Literacy standards, overall, are average and there are areas in English, drama and media studies, for example, where students' command of the spoken and written language enables them to progress well. In some other subjects, however, students do not have the linguistic and analytical skills to enable them to benefit fully from the curriculum. This was seen in geography where students were not speaking and writing fluently about the subject. Such inconsistency in the application of literacy skills is a barrier to further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The new AVCE course is proving popular, with a significant rise in entry numbers.
- Students' standards are satisfactory due to good teaching and up-to-date equipment. Higher-attaining female students displayed excellent layouts.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and help students develop good attitudes to their work.

- Courses are well managed, although several students dropped out of the course last year because it was too hard.
- Students do not use a wide enough range of software applications in their other sixth form subjects.

Commentary

165. The AVCE (Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education) level course in ICT was introduced last year, and is becoming increasingly popular, with 15 students in the current Year 12. They make satisfactory progress in designing memos and invoices, using previous experience on the GNVQ intermediate course in Year 11 to extend a good basic understanding of formats, layouts and audience. All gained nationally expected C grades. Year 13 students' interim results from Year 12, where two of the four in the class gained A grades in assessed assignments, indicate good achievement for both female and male students. In 2003, a group of seven GNVQ students passed the intermediate level in Year 12.
166. In lessons and work seen on the inspection, students made good progress, and standards of work were generally in line with national expectations at this early stage of the school year. Some students with weak language and literacy in both years were struggling, but were keen to do well.
167. All students showed very good attitudes to their work, due to the good supportive relations teachers developed, encouraging less confident students to contribute to discussion. Year 13 students worked well on initial planning for their own multimedia presentations developing PowerPoint skills, although they were only just beginning new projects. Two higher-attaining female students gained A grades for spreadsheet design coursework projects for a specified end user in Year 12, showing a good grasp of macros and excellent layouts. Whilst the students presented clear user guides, work lacked sufficient depth of evaluation because literacy standards were lower than national expectations.
168. In the small sample of three lessons and work seen, students made good progress, overall, due to good teaching. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enabled them to demonstrate routines briskly and maximise students' time for practising their skills. Teachers made homework deadlines clear, and supported students well by assessing their progress in class and setting them helpful individual targets. These helped them stay very well motivated, as they knew exactly what they needed to do to improve their AVCE grades. Students of different ethnic groups worked well together.
169. ICT is competently used by students in other sixth form subjects, but the range of specialist software applications used is still limited. Planned opportunities in lessons have previously been limited because too few computers were available but this situation has recently improved significantly. Media studies students have made an excellent start with video editing but in other subjects do not use ICT enough to model or analyse experimental data. Graphic design software has recently been ordered for design and technology and art.
170. Information technology (AVCE) lessons are well led and managed. Staff plan greater use by students of local visits and links to end-users in business for AVCE projects. Teachers use computerised records well to monitor achievement. The subject was not reported on in the last inspection, so it is not possible to gauge its improvement. It has good potential for further improvement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

171. Standards and achievement, overall, are satisfactory. Students progressing into the sixth form from Year 11 have satisfactory competence in applying generic computer skills, as there are timetabled vocational ICT lessons in Years 10 and 11. In several, although not all, sixth form subjects, students are making good progress in developing competence in researching on the

Internet and presenting coursework, but do not yet use a wide enough range of applications. The availability of computers in lessons has improved significantly recently, and innovative practice was observed in media studies, where students produced a presentation video for prospective Year 7 parents. AVCE students use ICT well in business education. Students in design and technology and art do not yet use CAD/CAM software, which has only recently been purchased. Key skills lessons are planned to support Year 12 students' learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art

Provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Management and leadership of the courses are very good.
- Students attain high grades in the GCE Advanced level examinations.
- Students' achievement is very good in both practical and contextual studies.
- Independent work contributes effectively to students' personal development.
- Teaching and learning are never less than good, and often very good.
- Student numbers have been very low, but are now improving.
- ICT and computer-aided design resources are underdeveloped, restricting students' progress and potential achievement.

Commentary

172. The department provides very well planned courses in GCE Advanced level, and Advanced Subsidiary level art and design. Examination results have been very good in recent years and high grades achieved. Standards are well above the national average, but student numbers are too small for meaningful comparisons.
173. Students are able to talk confidently about their work to the class group. They say how they have developed themes of investigation from studies of twentieth century art and translated their ideas into two- and three-dimensional artwork. Most students are familiar with the styles and techniques used by a number of major artists but are less sure as to how the objectives of artists are influenced by other art movements. Work for personal studies shows clear understanding of how lines of inquiry can be illustrated and communicated in visual form. Students' artwork shows individuality and initiative, and a willingness to explore media and to experiment with new and untried ideas. Generally, working sketch-books are good lively records of thought processes and developments from initial ideas to original artwork for finished projects.
174. Particularly good is students' work for the theme 'Sense of Place', where students have used digital cameras to capture images of their environment and develop ideas that have a strong emotional content. Strengths are in links to contextual studies and art gallery visits, pattern quality, the use of colour, and the extensive range of media used. Weaker areas are the lack of diversity of subject matter and style and the restricted quantity and quality of observational drawing.
175. Students have excellent attitudes; they are very keen to learn about art and design concepts. Practical work is carried out with enthusiasm and students work extremely well together and independently. Their achievement is very good in relation to their individual capabilities, and prior attainment.

176. The quality of teaching and learning are never less than good, and often very good. Courses are extremely well planned and presented, and all projects involve meaningful contextual links. Teachers are very passionate about their subject; they demonstrate considerable subject expertise and have a good knowledge of the examination requirements and assessment criteria. Students are encouraged with high quality individual feedback, and regular written assessment. They are inspired by the exciting tasks that are set for them. There is an insistence on high standards of conduct, and keeping to deadlines. A very productive, purposeful atmosphere is engendered in the art studios.
177. Leadership and management of the courses are very good. Department ethos is effective in promoting very good learning. Courses are greatly enhanced by visits to exhibitions in London, Cornwall and Paris and with workshops with local artists. There is clear vision of how the subject needs to develop, with a strong sense of purpose, and an ambition to promote post-16 visual education in a modern way. The department organises many links with other subject areas, and social, moral, and cultural connections through project themes and extra-curricular activities. However, ICT resources are significantly underdeveloped. The department has not kept abreast of educational initiatives in this field, and students' progress and potential achievement are constrained by the lack of opportunities to work with computer-aided design.
178. Very good improvements have been made since the previous inspection, and the number of students wishing to join the courses is increasing.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and are clearly self-motivated and engaged.
- Overall standards are below average but 2004 results showed a range of B and C grades.
- The main reason why overall provision is good is the high quality of teaching.

Commentary

179. The numbers taking the A level in 2004 were small and comparison with national averages using percentages is not meaningful. The average point score is below average (comparing 2004 results with 2003 national data – national data for 2004 is not yet available) but there was a good range of grades, including B and C. Overall, students achieve well.
180. Standards seen – albeit at the beginning of the academic year – were as you would expect for AS and A2 students. Students are keen, involved and clearly motivated by the demanding nature of the course. The course is academically demanding and, in the lessons seen, the teacher clearly had high expectations and was clearly 'pressing' the students to extend their experience through their own reading.
181. As with the main school, the reason why provision is good lies with the quality of teaching. Teaching is at least good – it is often very good. This is evidenced by: the ease and familiarity with which Year 13 students referred to their Year 12 work on Brecht; the students' results at A level – the course is particularly demanding academically as well as practically and clearly a significant amount of teacher support is required to develop students' written work to achieve the higher grades; and, finally, in the clear differences in approach to the work, their independence, maturity and general control of what they were doing by the older students.

182. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and the head of department has a very good understanding of the syllabus and the demands of the course, coupled with a broad experience of teaching texts for examination within English and drama. This balances well with the theatrical background of her colleague.
183. A key factor is the high quality of relationships that exist and the informal support given by staff is as important as formal lesson structures. In discussion, Year 13 students were confident and open in expressing their views and although the group was small there was a very positive dynamic in the exchange of views. The teacher had a particular skill of effective questioning, demanding more rigour in their thinking. The teacher also ensured that the students gave due weight to their ideas and did not waste time by generating ideas only to reject them equally quickly. The teacher is clearly aware of the difficulties inherent in students preparing a group practical project and, without directly intervening, nudged them to make effective decisions and stand by them.
184. Leadership and management of the department are good. The department plans to make good use of the post-16 courses to provide learning opportunities for younger pupils, particularly those involved in the vocational course.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

185. It was too soon to make overall judgements about **leisure and tourism** and the subject was sampled. The indications are that the overall provision is good.
186. The course is new and is offered as a GNVQ intermediate course. Overall, attainment on entry to the course is below average. Pupils are not at this stage of the course confident or independent learners; for example, they have difficulty with information research skills and in one lesson relied heavily on the support given by the teacher. However, students are achieving well and they are beginning to adopt the style required by the course. This is because the quality of teaching is good. The key characteristics of the teaching seen were:
- The positive rapport that teachers have with students.
 - Challenging activities set by the teacher and sympathetic raising of expectations building on what they have done so that, for example, in the next lesson a student is expected to report to the class.
 - Effective questioning, which demands more rigour in students' thinking about 'the market'.
 - A quiet firm consistent approach which builds students' confidence.
187. Overall, teachers have good subject knowledge and knowledge about the requirements of the course, which, coupled with effective planning, enables the teachers to support learning effectively.

BUSINESS

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching helps students gain good attitudes and achieve well.
- Students use ICT well to present their work but not enough to analyse financial data.
- Standards are satisfactory, although female students achieve more highly than males.
- In-depth links with local businesses are underdeveloped.

Commentary

188. In 2003, results in AVCE business were in line with the national average, with three-quarters

passing. Results reflected good achievement in relation to their GCSE standards on entry. The course is proving popular, and most students remain on the courses they start.

189. Inspection evidence shows that the standards of students currently in Year 12 and 13 are satisfactory, overall, in relation to course expectations. In lessons, students of all levels of attainment make good progress in improving below-average key skills of communication, number and ICT. They use ICT well to word process reports, incorporating effective research from web sites and part-time jobs. They do not yet evaluate financial data in enough depth. AVCE students in Year 13 produced well-written reports on ICT use in business. Students showed good attitudes, and those from ethnic minorities collaborated well in group discussion on European Union controls on monopoly markets.
190. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Well-structured lessons include interesting task sheets, which help students develop literacy and numerically, and they are well linked to examination mark schemes. Teachers have good relationships with students, which motivate them well, but some Year 12 students do not contribute to discussion and work at too slow a pace. Teachers' good business expertise helps students gain satisfactory understanding of the concept of 'monopoly.'
191. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly; marking is regular and detailed, and in the best practice, teachers give students targets to help them improve AVCE grades. Students are fully aware of what they need to do to improve.
192. The subject is well led and managed by an experienced teacher aided by enthusiastic colleagues. Students' progress against predicted grades is very well monitored. There are useful links with local businesses but these are under-developed, and outside speakers are infrequent. The subject, which has good capacity for further improvement, was not inspected previously,

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

193. **Citizenship** is the most popular AS level that the school provides. It is particularly popular amongst female students. In 2004, 11 students took the course and half of the group gained grades A to C. Students, overall, achieve very well. Although the subject was only sampled because it was so close to the start of the academic year, the indications are that provision is good.
194. Effective teaching supports students to become confident in their learning. The teacher has a brisk purposeful style to which students relate very well. In one lesson, the teacher challenged students both with the idea whether human rights are universal and also to articulate their thoughts with greater precision, leading them through very effective questioning to consider 'universal rights' in relation to 'cultural differences'. Students were sufficiently confident to ask questions about the exercise of rights and engage in useful discussion and this helped in the process of mediating their own learning. The range of effective resources further stimulated discussion. The lesson objectives had been shared with students so that they were clear where this lesson was leading and the general thrust of the work.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE)

195. **PSHE** in the sixth form is satisfactory. It is integrated with religious education and careers education and guidance. There is a planned programme, with an emphasis on self – evaluation. Students are given opportunities for personal development through their involvement in school productions such as the annual pantomime and through their involvement with community projects. The planned programme for religious education meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. The second year of the programme has not yet been published.

CAREERS EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE (CEG)

196. **CEG** in the sixth form is very good. There is a strong focus on continuous self-review as an aid to the careful management of the student's plans for higher education, training and future employment. External resources, including the Connexions personal adviser, are used well. For example, they are a key factor in the professional, independent advice that the students continually receive. All students participate in the work placement programme, which is regarded as an example of good practice.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

197. **WRL** is good. The school's curriculum and consortium arrangements with local educational institutions enable students to take a wide range of courses, which prepare them well for the world of work and continuing education. Provision would be even better if there was access to entry qualification courses for a greater range of skills. A very good careers education and guidance programme underpins work-related learning. Opportunities for enterprise through Young Enterprise activities and school and community projects also enhance this curriculum.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	3
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		3
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3

The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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