

## **ERRATUM SLIP**

### **All Saints Catholic High School**

**Unique Reference Number: 107160**

**Contract Number: 268731**

**Date of inspection: 13/09/2004**

**Reporting inspector: Anthony Beaver**

**INSPECTION REPORT - the following paragraph should read as follows:-**

### **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

#### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

Since the last inspection in October 1998, satisfactory improvement has been made. Standards are not as high, because fewer pupils already attaining higher academic levels at age 11 years now enter the school. However, pupils make good progress, achieve well and gain the standards that might reasonably be expected of them. Teaching remains good and pupils continue to learn well. The school's ethos as a caring Christian community remains very strong, and pupils' attitudes to learning, relationships and behaviour remain very good. The key issues for improvement in the inspection of 1998 have been well managed. The school has become a specialist for sport and new accommodation for physical education is shortly to be built.

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 107160

Headteacher: Mr R B Sawyer

Lead inspector: Dr A R Beaver

Dates of inspection: 13–16 September 2004

Inspection number: 268731

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school:              | Comprehensive                                  |
| School category:             | Voluntary aided                                |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11 to 18 years                                 |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed  |
| Number on roll:              | 1188   |
| School address:              | Granville Road<br>Sheffield<br>South Yorkshire |
| Postcode:                    | S2 2RJ   |
| Telephone number:            | 0114 2724851                                   |
| Fax number:                  | 0114 2765371                                   |
| Appropriate authority:       | The Governing Body                             |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mr J McNally                                   |
| Date of previous inspection: | 19 October 1998                                |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

All Saints Catholic High School is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic comprehensive school located in the centre of the City of Sheffield. The school was formerly Grant Maintained. It is larger than most secondary schools and provides for the needs of 1188 girls and boys aged 11 to 18 years, of whom 194 are in the sixth form. Similar numbers of girls and boys attend the school. There are 134 more pupils in the school than at the last inspection and 72 of these are in the sixth form, which has increased considerably in size in recent years. About half of the pupils come from homes that follow the Roman Catholic faith. Most pupils previously attended one of eight Catholic primary schools within the diocese of Hallam, but pupils also come from many other primary schools in Sheffield. They have a wide range of social backgrounds, and a broadly average number of pupils claim entitlement to a free school meal. Ten per cent of pupils have minority ethnic backgrounds, many with Caribbean or African origins. Very few are at an early stage in learning English. The proportion of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs is similar to that of most schools. These pupils have a wide range of needs which include learning difficulties, autism and communication, and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. An average percentage of pupils have statements of special need. A small number have physical impairments and receive special support in an Integrated Resource Unit. The number of pupils who joined or left the school at other than the usual ages of 11 or 16 years or above is typical of national mobility, except for Years 10 and 11 where mobility was above average last year. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school spans the full range of ability and is typical of that usually found nationally, but there has been a reduction in the numbers of pupils of higher academic potential entering the school in recent years. The school has specialist status for sport and physical education and holds the Sportsmark. It is involved in educational initiatives within the South-East Sheffield Education Action Zone, including Excellence in Cities and the Leading Edge Partnership.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |                  |                | Subject responsibilities  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------|---|
| 20224                          | Dr A R Beaver    | Lead inspector |   |
| 13762                          | Mr N Shelley     | Lay inspector  |   |
| 30941                          | Mr K Brammer     | Team inspector | English   |
| 32115                          | Mr J S Foster    | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages  |
| 31693                          | Mr P T Hanafin   | Team inspector | Art and design  |
| 20619                          | Ms J A Hazlewood | Team inspector | Business and other vocational courses                                       |
| 27416                          | Mr T Howard      | Team inspector | Mathematics   |
| 32169                          | Mr G R O'Hagan   | Team inspector | Information and communication technology                                    |
| 1994                           | Ms H Olds        | Team inspector | History<br>Work related learning  |
| 15971                          | Mr M Pye         | Team inspector | Physical education<br>Citizenship   |
| 12721                          | Mr D Riddle      | Team inspector | Design and technology   |
| 3731                           | Mr W G Robson    | Team inspector | English (sixth form)  |
| 31701                          | Mr G Rudland     | Team inspector | Music   |
| 6432                           | Dr V M Sewter    | Team inspector | Science; physics (sixth form)   |
| 11300                          | Mr B R Smith     | Team inspector | Geography<br>Special educational needs<br>English as an additional language |

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

All Saints Catholic High School has a strong sense of mission as a Christian community. The pupils respond with very positive attitudes. They behave very well. **It is an effective school** and meets well the needs of girls and boys of differing ability from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds. The pupils achieve well and reach typical national standards by age 16. The teaching and learning are good. The very good leadership of the headteacher and his senior colleagues and the strategic vision of governors give the school clear direction. The management is good and the school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school's strong sense of Christian mission ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral and social needs are very well provided for and that relationships across the school are very good.
- Although, overall, pupils achieve well and reach, at least, typical national standards, their results in GCSE examinations should be higher still.
- The teaching is good overall and, consequently, pupils learn well, but not all teachers use assessment well enough.
- The headteacher, his senior colleagues and governors give very clear direction for the strategic development of the school and the further raising of standards.
- The pupils are cared for very well, and enjoy the considerable benefits of the school's specialist status for sport and physical education.

Since the last inspection in October 1998, satisfactory improvement has been made. Standards are not as high, because fewer pupils already attaining higher academic levels at age 11 years now transfer to other schools. However, pupils make good progress, achieve well and gain the standards that might reasonably be expected of them. Teaching remains good and pupils continue to learn well. The school's ethos as a caring Christian community remains very strong, and pupils' attitudes to learning, relationships and behaviour remain very good. The key issues for improvement in the inspection of 1998 have been well managed. The school has become a specialist for sport and new accommodation for physical education is shortly to be built.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance compared with: |                                 | all schools |      |      | Similar schools** |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------|------|-------------------|
|                            |                                 | 2001        | 2002 | 2003 | 2003              |
| Year 11                    | GCSE/GNVQ examinations          | NA          | C    | C    | C                 |
| Year 13                    | A/AS level and VCE examinations | A           | B    | B    |                   |

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average*  
*For Year 11, similar schools\*\* are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9. 2004 results are not yet validated nationally, but reference is made to them below and in the full report. Although religious education was not inspected (as this is subject to separate inspection under Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspection Act), GCSE examination results in this subject, which is taken by all students, are included in the calculation of grades shown above; in 2003, pupils achieved least well in this subject compared with all the others in which they took examinations.*

**Overall, girls and boys of differing competence from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well.** Pupils enter the school with standards generally typical of those expected nationally, but proportionately fewer pupils enter Year 7 attaining the highest levels compared with the situation six years ago. Consequently, the trend in results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations (inclusive of religious education) has been below the national upward trend in performance. In the Year 9 National Curriculum tests, girls and boys

reached average national standards in 2002 and 2003. Pupils usually attain well above average standards in English, and the average result in this subject in 2003 was greatly exceeded by pupils' 2004 performance. The 2003 above average standard in mathematics and the average standard in science were matched by 2004 results. Results in 2003 were in line with what might reasonably be expected of pupils from their prior attainment in Year 6 National Curriculum tests. In GCSE examinations, average national standards were reached in 2002 and 2003 (*the latest year for which national comparative data are available*) including in the attainment of five or more A\* to C subject grades. Slightly fewer pupils gained five A\* to C grades in 2004 than in 2003, but the 2004 results are still subject to outcomes of the school's appeals to the examination boards for remarking in several subjects. The targets set for attainment in GCSE examinations are very challenging and the 2003 result was a little below the target set for reaching five or more A\* to C grades. Fewer girls gained five or more A\* to C grades than boys, a situation in contrast to what is typical nationally and to what girls and boys usually attain in the school. Boys' performance regularly compares well with that of all boys nationally. Overall, compared with results in similar schools, pupils reached typical national levels of performance in 2003. Pupils usually attain above the national average standard in most design and technology subjects and, in 2002 and 2003, many students reached the highest grade in history. Results in modern foreign languages and music have been below average. Pupils in the school's Integrated Resource Unit for those with special educational needs achieve well. During the inspection, pupils reached standards well above those typical nationally in history and in physical education in Years 10 and 11. Standards were below those expected nationally in information and communication technology (ICT), modern languages and music.

In the sixth form, students reached above average standards in advanced courses in 2002 and 2003. Results in 2004 were of a similar standard. Girls and boys from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds achieved well.

**Pupils' personal development is very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good** overall. They have very positive attitudes, behave very well and attend regularly.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school gives pupils a good quality of education. The teaching is good** and enables the pupils to learn well. The curriculum gives pupils good opportunities for learning, especially in sport and physical education. The school is a very supportive and caring community for learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management are good**, overall. The headteacher, who has been in post for one year, with the leadership team of senior staff, leads the school very effectively and gives clear direction for its future development. The governors maintain a strong sense of mission and work vigorously with the headteacher to establish a clear strategic vision to take the school forward. Management is good and funds are used well.

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

Parents are very satisfied with the school. They think it is well led, holds high expectations of their children and helps them to become mature and confident. Some would like further information on how well their children are getting on. Pupils like attending the school, and think that they are well taught and expected to work hard. They expect high standards of behaviour and recognise that, occasionally, some pupils do not behave well enough. They consider that any bullying that takes place is rapidly and firmly dealt with.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- Continue to increase the numbers of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in GCSE examinations.



- Ensure that all teachers' use of assessment information is equally effective, so as to improve further the quality of teaching and learning.
- Clarify more the priorities for the continued development of the sixth form.

## OVERALL EVALUATION

**All Saints Sixth Form is effective.** Students consistently attain above average standards and achieve well, given their prior attainment from GCSE examinations on entry to their courses. The teaching and learning are of very good quality. Students have a good choice of advanced courses, but no courses below advanced are available. Overall, leadership and management are good, but governors have not yet put into final form strategic direction for the sixth form's development. The quality of education that students receive has been well maintained since the last inspection in 1998. The education provided is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students attain above average standards in advanced courses.
- The teaching is stimulating and ensures that students learn very successfully.
- Students are very mature, responsible and form very good relationships; they have very positive attitudes to learning.
- The care, guidance and support that they receive are of very good quality.
- The sixth form is well managed, but priorities for its further development are not yet decided.

## 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

| Curriculum area                          | Evaluation  |
|--|---|
| English, languages and communication     | Provision is <b>good</b> in <b>English literature</b> . Good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well. In <b>French</b> , provision is <b>very good</b> . Students benefit from very good teaching and planned visits to France. They achieve very well. |
| Mathematics                              | There is <b>good</b> provision in <b>mathematics</b> . Students achieve well. Teaching is very good; it challenges students and helps them to learn independently.  |
| Science                                  | Provision is <b>good</b> in <b>physics</b> . Students achieve well. Teaching and learning are very good; teachers have exceptional subject knowledge.   |
| Information and communication technology | <b>ICT</b> provision is <b>good</b> . Good teaching, precise assessment and help and guidance enable students to learn and to achieve well.   |
| Humanities                               | Provision in <b>history</b> is <b>very good</b> . Students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are very good; teachers have high expectations of students.   |
| Visual and performing arts and media     | In <b>art</b> , provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Students' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good but the department lacks an art room for students to develop their studies further.  |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel  | Provision in <b>physical education and sport</b> is <b>very good</b> . Good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well. Leadership and management are very good  |

Business

In **business studies**, provision is **good**. Students' achievement is satisfactory but is improving because of their very positive attitudes. Teachers know their subject very well.

*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**

Students are given very good advice about their futures. The subject guidance and support given to them are helpful and enable them to achieve well and reach above average standards.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**The leadership and management are good** and ensure that students receive a good quality of education, especially very good teaching. Some opportunity is given to students to take courses in neighbouring institutions, but no courses below advanced are available. Vision for the further development of the sixth form and the implications for resources and accommodation are not yet clear enough.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students have positive views of their sixth form experience. They consider that they have good opportunities and are well supported.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

All references throughout the report to 'average', 'above average' or 'below average' etc refer to comparisons with national standards. 2004 results are not yet validated nationally, but reference is made to them below.

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, pupils of all abilities and from different social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds achieve well throughout the school. Standards are typical of those expected nationally by Year 11. In the sixth form, standards are above average.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and reach, at least, typical national standards.
- Results in GCSE examinations are at the standard expected nationally, compared with all schools and similar schools; in 2003 and 2004, performance was a little below the school's own challenging targets set for attainment of five or more grades A\* to C. (2004 results remain subject to the school's appeals for remarking.)
- In the sixth form, students achieve well; they reach consistently above average standards in A-level examinations.

#### Commentary

1. Overall, when pupils enter Year 7, their attainment is broadly in line with the standards expected nationally in English, mathematics and science. However, relatively fewer pupils now enter the school already attaining above average standards at the age of 11 years, compared with when the school was last inspected in 1998. There are also relatively more pupils who enter the school with less well developed academic skills and potential than at the time of the last inspection. In recent years, more pupils joining the school are identified as having special educational needs in learning.
2. Girls and boys of differing academic potential and from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds make good progress in their first three years in the school. They achieve well by the end of Year 9. Results in the 2002 and 2003 National Curriculum tests were average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. (Similar schools for Year 9 are those whose pupils attained similarly by the end of Year 6.) Average results in English in 2003 reduced the school's overall five year trend in results to below that of the upward national trend. However, in 2004, pupils reached the well above average standards in English that they usually gain, and pupils also reached higher standards in mathematics and science. Consequently, the overall result in the national tests was ahead of that of 2003, the last year for which results are currently nationally validated.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English       | 32.9 (35.6)    | 33.4 (33.3)      |
| Mathematics   | 36.8 (34.6)    | 35.4 (34.7)      |
| Science       | 34.3 (32.4)    | 33.6 (33.3)      |

*There were 203 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. Results for 2004 are not yet validated nationally.*

3. During Years 10 and 11, pupils from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds continue to make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 11. They reached average standards in the GCSE examinations in 2003 in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. *(Similar schools for Year 11 are those whose students achieved similarly at the end of Year 9.)* Students' attainment of five or more grades A\* to C was also at the national average standard. The trend in results in recent years has been below the rising national trend, and this was not arrested by the 2004 results, which were largely in line with the standards of 2003, except that slightly fewer students attained five or more A\* to C grades or the top grades, A\* and A (The 2004 results remain subject to the school's appeals for remarking in several subjects.) The school did not reach the challenging targets that it had set itself for attainment of five or more grades A\* to C in GCSE examinations in 2003, the last year for which nationally validated results are available. The target set was for 60 per cent of the year group to attain five or more grades A\* to C, and the result was that 54 per cent of pupils reached the target. The process to mentor and support Year 11 pupils prior to the examinations in 2004 was rigorous, and the school is refining these procedures further to ensure that standards are raised to reach the targets set for 2005.
4. During the inspection, pupils from all backgrounds achieved well in all years. In the vast majority of the 116 lessons seen in Years 7 to 11, pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour in class and good teaching combined to ensure that they achieved well. Pupils achieved well in English, mathematics and science across all year groups to reach standards above those typical nationally in Years 7 to 9 in all three subjects. The standards seen were typical of those usually seen nationally in English and science in Years 10 and 11; they were above this level in mathematics.
5. In pupils' work seen in other subjects, where standards on entry to the school are generally below those typically expected nationally, pupils achieve well to reach expected standards. Their attainment was below expected standards in ICT where, until recently, the subject has lacked enough curricular time, and in modern foreign languages and music, where teaching is too variable in quality. Pupils were seen to achieve very well and reach above expected standards in history and physical education in Years 10 and 11, where teachers' very good command of their subjects and high expectations enabled the pupils to reach their best standards.

### **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  | 54 (51)        | 52 (50)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 87 (89)        | 91 (91)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 98 (94)        | 96 (96)          |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 36.1 (35.0)    | 34.7 (34.8)      |

*There were 190 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. Results for 2004 are not yet nationally validated.*

*Although religious education was not inspected (as this is subject to separate inspection under Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspection Act), GCSE examination results in this subject, which is taken by all students, are included in the calculation of grades shown above.*

6. Pupils' literacy skills are typical of those found nationally. They achieve well in speaking and listening, but their skills in writing and, particularly, in reading, are less well developed. Pupils' competence in use of numeracy across the curriculum is good, and they use number confidently and well in many subjects. ICT is used extensively across the curriculum. However, pupils' competence is below what is typical by Year 9, but reaches expected national standards by Year 11. Pupils have good competence in use of ICT. This was particularly noted in mathematics and design and technology. Pupils' skills are developing rapidly because teachers are increasingly confident and competent themselves in using ICT in lessons.
7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. In mathematics and science, these pupils make good progress. In English, they gain confidence in lessons and improve their understanding well. All pupils with statements of special need entered for the 2004 GCSE examinations gained at least one A\*-G grade. Overall, pupils and students with physical impairment in the Integrated Resource Unit achieve as well as other pupils. One pupil with physical impairment gained nine grades A\* to C in the 2004 GCSE examinations. Where necessary – for example, in science, in design and technology and in the Integrated Resource base - modified furnishings help these pupils to achieve to their potential. All those with statements of special needs achieve well in GCSE examinations.
8. The progress of the few pupils for whom English is an additional language is closely monitored by the special needs department. A very small number of pupils in Years 7 and 10 are at the stage of learning English where extra help is needed. The older pupils are progressing well; the Year 7 pupils are being carefully assessed. Two assistants have had specific training in 'English as an additional language in predominantly white schools'. The effective support given in English lessons has been monitored and reported by local authority inspectors. The pupils are proud of their achievements and make very good progress in linguistic development. Target setting for them is very effective.
9. Since the last inspection, standards have not been as high because, overall, the range of pupils' academic attainment when they enter the school is below what it was in 1998. Some 30 fewer pupils of higher academic potential are now present in each of the school's year groups, compared with the situation in 1998. Nevertheless, pupils' progress and achievement are good, and many continue to reach well above average standards.

### **Sixth form**

10. Students enter the sixth form having generally attained the standards generally expected of those who begin advanced courses nationally. Results of A-level and other advanced courses in 2002 and 2003 were above the national average. Students from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds achieve well, because they are very well taught and their mature and responsible attitudes enable them to do well.

### **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 | 88.4 (86.9)    | 89.4 (92.6)      |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 30.8 (36.5)    | 32.6 (35.3)      |
| Average point score per pupil            | 289.6 (275.2)  | 258.2 (263.3)    |

*There were 85 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. 2004 results are not yet nationally validated.*

11. In the nine subjects that are reported in full in Part C of this report, students achieve very well in French, history and sport and physical education and reach well above average standards in these subjects. Standards are below those expected for the advanced vocational course in ICT, but students are now achieving well and making good progress.

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

Pupils' personal development, attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is, equally, very good and very well provided for overall. They attend regularly.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are enthusiastic about school and enjoy their lessons and other educational activities.
- Relationships among pupils from all social and ethnic backgrounds are very good and they behave very well.
- Pupils develop mature and responsible attitudes very well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good.

## Commentary

### Attendance

12. Pupils' attendance is above the average for secondary schools and their punctuality is good. The school works effectively to ensure good attendance through good links with parents.

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

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 6.2 | School data          | 0.9 |
| 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.*

13. Pupils are keen to come to school because they like it. They prize the quality of education and care that they receive. They take full advantage of their opportunities and many participate in the extra-curricular activities available to them, especially sport.
14. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning enable them to listen very well during lessons and work conscientiously. They co-operate very well and are mutually supportive. Their behaviour is very good and contributes much to learning because teaching is able to proceed without disruption in the vast majority of lessons. Teachers' skills in managing behaviour are very good. Pupils do very well to sustain their standards of behaviour when moving about the narrow corridors and other restrictive premises. Their consideration for others and their upholding of the rules is noteworthy. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds get on very well together. Incidents of bullying are few and are effectively dealt with.
15. Pupils are confident to express themselves and offer opinions mainly because of the respectful way in which they are treated by their teachers and tutors. They are willing to take responsibility. For example, pupils take responsibility for the management of the 800 accounts held in the school bank, for raising money for charities and as members of the school council. However, there are too few such opportunities.
16. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes towards the support that they receive. This is particularly apparent in break and lunchtime activities in the Integrated Resource Unit. In departments where provision for special needs is less extensive, such as music, the pupils behave very well and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils work hard and are involved in many school activities. Very good relationships are apparent in classrooms and around the school. Pupils in the Integrated Resource Unit are very happy and cheerful in their work. They are encouraged to be very independently minded and do not, necessarily, require the constant support of the Resource in their daily work.

## Exclusions

17. The number of exclusions has significantly decreased compared to the previous year and is now broadly in line with the average for secondary schools. New and effectively applied behaviour-management strategies are the main reasons for this improvement.

**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                                     | 1067                 | 76                                | 1                              |
| White – Irish                                       | 4                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| White – any other White background                  | 25                   | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean                   | 10                   | 1                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Black African                     | 2                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Asian                             | 4                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – any other mixed background                  | 13                   | 4                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani                  | 5                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 1                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean                  | 23                   | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – African                    | 10                   | 3                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 13                   | 1                                 | 0                              |
| Chinese   | 5                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Any other ethnic group                              | 6                    | 0                                 | 0                              |

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

18. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils develop very well spiritually. The Catholic ethos of the school provides many opportunities for them to develop self-awareness and to reflect upon beliefs and values. During morning registration, teachers encourage pupils to reflect on stimulating "Thoughts for the Day". A news-sheet, prepared by the chaplain, extends these into "Thoughts for the Week". When given the opportunity to reflect in assemblies, pupils respond very well. Many take advantage of regular opportunities to attend retreats that are organised by Salesians and the local Catholic dioceses. Pupils also develop their appreciation of other values and beliefs through the study of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism in religious education lessons. Teachers help pupils to empathise with others, and to be concerned and compassionate. For example, the art department worked with pupils to design and erect a permanent memorial in a local park to victims of a cholera epidemic, where many graves are unmarked.
19. Pupils' moral development is very good. They understand the difference between right and wrong very well and respond well to teachers' emphasis on the importance of taking responsibility for one's own behaviour. As a result, behaviour around the school is very good and pupils generally respect each other's property and school equipment. Pupils develop into mature young adults and many are able to express thoughtful views about ethical issues. For example, Year 8 pupils in a geography lesson debated the issue of conservation, as opposed to the exploitation of natural resources, with insight and maturity

20. Social development is also very good. Pupils, including those with physical impairments, work very well together in groups and show respect for each other. Teachers encourage pupils to work cooperatively in most subjects. A wide range of residential visits, retreats and field trips broadens pupils' experience of the wider community and helps them to develop very good social skills. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility through the junior

sports leadership awards. The school council is beginning to offer further opportunities to exercise responsibility. Many pupils are keen to contribute to society by supporting several charities and organisations such as Fair Trade, Cafod, cancer relief and Operation Christmas Child.

21. Pupils' cultural development is good. Some opportunities are very good, as in music. Many pupils increase their awareness and understanding of other European cultures through visits and exchanges to France and Spain. Pupils appreciate cultural diversity and respect other people's values; relationships between pupils from different ethnic groups are very good. However, the school provides relatively few opportunities for pupils to explore other cultures and traditions from around the world.

### **Sixth form**

22. Students are very pleased with the courses that they are able to choose and the very good quality of teaching that they receive. They are more than pleased with the range of enrichment experiences in which they can participate, and greatly appreciate the generous amount of support and guidance given to them by their teachers and tutors. Students are very conscientious towards their studies because they are mature and responsible and committed to achieving as well as they can. They develop well their skills in independent study.
23. The school makes an effective contribution to sixth form students' personal development. Consequently, students' conduct and relationships are very good and their attendance is well above average. They are mature and keen to take on responsibility. Therefore, they are very good role models for younger pupils, some of whom they support, for example, in work in literacy and numeracy. Others participate in voluntary work in local primary schools as part of the community sports leader award scheme. Many help the chaplain to organise dances; others are involved with the "Rainbow Group", which provides invaluable support for bereaved pupils and those whose parents separate. Many, but not all, participate in community service. Students take responsibility for their own community through their own committee that they run efficiently and through which they organise fund-raising events. They take good care of their recently refurbished common room. Spiritual development continues to be very good and students have ample opportunities to reflect on their values and beliefs through regular assemblies in the sixth form.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides pupils with a good quality of education. The teaching and learning are good in main school and very good in the sixth form, although teachers' use of assessment is not yet effective enough, especially in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very well provided for. Links with parents and the community are good.

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning in the main school is good. In the sixth form, it is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching enables pupils of differing ability and from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds to learn successfully.
- Teachers have very good command of their subjects and pupils learn well from this expertise.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good because relationships with teachers are very good; teachers manage their classes very well.
- Teachers do not all use assessment well enough in Years 7 to 9 to make their teaching even more effective in enabling pupils to learn.

## Commentary

24. The teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. The quality of teaching seen was slightly better in Years 10 and 11, where several lessons were excellent, than in Years 7 to 9. However, the overall quality across all main school year groups was good. Teaching meets the needs of all girls and boys from differing social, ethnic and religious backgrounds equally and effectively. As a result, all pupils learn and achieve well.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 166 lessons**

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor   | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 5 (3%)    | 49 (30%)  | 78 (47%) | 28 (17%)     | 6 (4%)         | 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. Figures total lessons seen across Years 7 to 13. Lessons in religious education were not inspected. Percentage figures do not total 100 because of rounding.*

25. During the last inspection in 1998, teaching was good throughout the school. However, a higher proportion of very good and excellent teaching is now taking place, and a substantial majority of the lessons in Years 7 to 11 are, at least, good. The number of pupils who now enter the school with lower overall academic attainment is greater than six years ago, partly because, at present, fewer transfer from the most academically successful primary school in the city, unlike the situation prior to 1998. Consequently, teachers need to use a wider range of skills to manage their classes successfully and to ensure that good learning takes place. Most teachers have enhanced their skills well, because the headteacher and senior management have given strong emphasis to developing the quality of teaching and learning. The school has very recently gained the status of a Training School. Teachers use ICT with much skill and confidence to enhance pupils' learning.
26. Teachers' command of their subjects is generally very good and helps them to make the work that they set pupils interesting and challenging. Consequently, pupils learn well and extend their subject knowledge and understanding. Teachers also manage their classes very well because relationships are usually very good. As a result, boys and girls from all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well from the good teaching that they receive. Pupils respond well to teachers and to learning; they have very positive attitudes towards their work and behave very well in class. A few lessons were not satisfactory, mainly because teachers talked for too long and prevented pupils from taking initiative for their learning to the extent to which they should have done. However, across most subjects, the teaching is consistently of good quality. It provides a particularly effective challenge to pupils' learning in history and mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Lessons are carefully planned and delivered. This was seen in a Year 8 English lesson, in which literacy was strongly reinforced with patience and understanding. All work is appropriate to individual needs. Where necessary, pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups withdrawn from mainstream classes; they are well taught in these situations. However, the emphasis is on teaching pupils with special needs in mainstream classes, where improved use of ICT is benefiting them most. Support assistants are very effectively deployed and enable these pupils to make the most of their learning opportunities. The teaching of pupils who are in the Integrated Resource Unit is good overall. The pupils are fully integrated into lessons and all activities. Additional support is unobtrusive and effective and provided by well trained staff. One teacher and over two full-time equivalent teaching assistants are specifically allocated to the resource unit. However, all staff involve themselves in the effective learning and support of those with physical impairments.
28. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is effectively used. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall, but very good in, for example, history, physical education and science. Consequently,

pupils speak and listen well in class in response. The teaching of numeracy is, generally, good and pupils' competence in using this skill is, therefore, also good. However, teachers do not always share learning objectives of lessons sufficiently with pupils, who then do not understand well enough what they are intended to learn.

29. The effectiveness with which assessment of pupils' work is used by teachers is satisfactory overall. However, the use of assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not satisfactory, because, in many subjects, pupils are not always informed of the levels at which they are working. For example, in music, ICT and geography departments, the use of National Curriculum levels varies too much and is sometimes inaccurate. Teachers' predictions of Year 9 pupils' levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science, also varies too much in accuracy. Assessment is better in Years 10 and 11, where departments use GCSE examination criteria to assess progress against target grades. The marking of work is, generally, thorough and accurate, although it sometimes lacks enough comments or guidance about what pupils must do to improve. This is a planned focus for school development, in working towards the use of assessment to support learning more directly. The best practice seen was in the mathematics and science departments, which set targets and assess pupils' performance regularly with use of National Curriculum levels. Pupils are aware of their end-of-key-stage targets and how well they are doing in these subjects. However, there is wide variation in practice between departments and sometimes within departments, and this was the situation at the last inspection.

### **Sixth form**

30. The teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. Almost half of the lessons seen were of very good or excellent quality, and a substantial majority were of, at least, good quality. Of the nine subjects reported in full in Part C of this report, the teaching of French, history, mathematics and physics was consistently very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and use this to challenge students to learn very well. Very good relationships assist the process of learning and students have confidence in their teachers. Consequently, students take considerable responsibility for their own learning and make the most of their opportunities in a mature manner. For example, students at the beginning of Year 12, who are following a course in government and politics by distance learning, made very responsible use of a video link with a teacher on screen, but with no other teacher present in the room, to extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject well.
31. Teachers use assessment well to support students' learning. The marking of students' work is regular and accurate. Teachers use their experience and expertise from marking in external examinations to enhance students' understanding of assessment processes. Potential targets are set early in Year 12 and students receive constant feedback on their progress toward these. Regular dialogue between teachers and students provides students with regular support and advice on how they may improve their performance. Formal assessments provide regular information on how students are progressing toward their target grades.

### **The curriculum**

Curricular provision is good, both in the main school and the sixth form. The school provides a broad, inclusive curriculum in Years 7 to 11 and an extensive range of advanced courses for sixth form students. Opportunities for enrichment are good. The accommodation is satisfactory. Staffing and learning resources are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is open access for all to the curriculum; provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, but the GCSE course in English Literature is restricted to higher attainers.
- A range of vocational courses and alternatives to the standard GCSE programme extends the curriculum very well in Years 10 and 11.

- Enrichment activities, including residential experience, give good support for learning outside the school day; there are very good opportunities for sport.
- Insufficient time is provided for the guidance courses of personal and social education.
- There is an extensive range of advanced courses for sixth form students, but no intermediate or lower courses are provided.

### **Commentary**

32. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well and fulfils statutory requirements. There is open and equal access to all parts of the curriculum, except for GCSE English Literature, which is provided only for higher attaining pupils. Curricular opportunities for pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical impairments, are very good throughout the school. Pupils in the Integrated Resource Unit are assessed at an early stage. All pupils receive appropriate support and the school makes a great effort to make all curricular and extra-curricular activities available to the pupils, including sports, fieldwork, visits and inter-school activities. This is seen to advantage, for example, in the music department. All pupils are regularly monitored and reviews track individual progress. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum allows for appropriate work-related studies in courses leading to the Youth Award for those who would benefit.
33. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good. It provides the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Some pupils have the opportunity of an accelerated course in French or Spanish, and two groups are currently preparing to sit the GCSE examination in Year 9. Some pupils study two foreign languages in Years 8 and 9.
34. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is effectively applied. Summer schools, prior to the transfer of pupils into Year 7, help their development of literacy and numeracy skills. Talented pupils also have opportunities to enhance their skills – for example, in sport and in creative arts. Increased emphasis on teaching and learning, with use of ICT, better enable pupils to access the curriculum.
35. In Years 10 and 11, provision is also good. ICT provision, an issue in the last inspection in 1998, is now satisfactory. The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. An expanding range of vocational courses and alternatives to the standard GCSE examination programme, some off-site, extends the curriculum very well. This is in response to the school's planning to expand curricular opportunities for ages 14 to 18. A wide range of choice of courses is offered in science, physical education, modern foreign languages and design and technology. There is good provision for work-related learning, including work experience for all pupils in Year 10.
36. The guidance programme of personal and social education (PSE) provided in Years 7 to 11 includes all the required aspects of health education, as well as issues in citizenship and careers education. Statutory requirements for careers education are met. Although the guidance programme of PSE is better provided for than in the last inspection in 1998, there is insufficient lesson time allocated to cover all issues in depth. Pupils' understanding of citizenship is not sufficiently developed in subjects beyond the guidance (PSE) lessons. Religious education is fully provided for all age groups.
37. Activities to enrich pupils' learning give good opportunities outside the school day. There are very good opportunities for sport and music, enjoyed by large numbers of boys and girls. All pupils have opportunities to develop leadership skills in their sport and physical education course. The extensive range of field trips and residential experiences, including pupil-exchanges and study visits abroad, enriches the curriculum considerably and makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal development.
38. Staff are very well qualified and experienced in the subjects that they teach. There are few problems of recruitment or retention of staff. Support and administrative staff are very good.



39. The school has satisfactory accommodation, although rising numbers of pupils are creating pressure on specialist areas. It is maintained well. Pupils enjoy attractively landscaped grounds that include social areas. Despite some narrow stairways and corridors, large numbers of pupils are able to move around the school sensibly and with consideration for others, including pupils with difficulties of mobility. Lifts are available to give access to students with physical impairments. Plans to build a sports-hall complex are fully approved and well advanced and will soon transform the school's sports facilities. The school has done very well to resolve this key issue of the last two inspections.
40. Learning resources are good. Lack of textbooks was highlighted in the last inspection report, but this no longer applies and in most departments the quantity and range of resources are good. The well funded and managed Learning Resource Centre provides an attractive, welcoming environment for quiet study and the book stock is extensive. The provision of ICT resources is outstanding. The school has six ICT rooms, a wireless network, a motorised large screen in the hall, a plasma screen at reception, over 30 fully interactive whiteboards and a set of interactive 'voting' handsets. Ten teachers act as interactive whiteboard trainers for other staff and there are three full-time technical support staff. All teachers have a bluetooth laptop, with four class sets for pupils. Industry-standard software such as Macromedia Dreamweaver is available across the network, alongside access to Research Machines' virtual learning environment. The school's website is underdeveloped with no intranet for pupils' use, but these matters are in process of further development.

### **Sixth form**

41. Curricular provision in the sixth form is good. Increasing numbers of students study the extensive range of advanced courses, including government and politics by use of a video-link. Almost all students complete the courses they embark on, and the great majority continues its studies in Higher Education. However, no courses are provided below advanced level and there is no provision for the performing arts. Students wishing to follow vocational courses can do so at the local college.
42. Enrichment of the curriculum is good. All students follow courses in religious education, key skills and liberal studies and are prepared for the A-level general studies examination in Year 13.
43. Staffing and resources to support teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Accommodation is satisfactory. However, many more students are in the sixth form than in 1998 and conditions for some groups are cramped in some of the smaller rooms used for sixth form work. Students do not have easy access to resources and materials in art and business studies because these subjects do not have designated rooms. This restricts opportunities for students to study outside lesson times. Common room facilities are good.

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

Pupils are very well cared for and they receive good advice, support and guidance.

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

- Very good provision is made for pupils' welfare.
- Very good information and advice are provided about the next stage of pupils' education.
- Support for pupils to achieve well by use of mentoring is very good.

## Commentary

44. Induction arrangements are very good and, consequently, pupils feel welcome and make a well-informed start in the school. The tutor groups that are new this term are of mixed ages and combine pupils from each of Years 7, 8 and 9. Inspection evidence in the second week of term indicated that the new groups enabled pupils to integrate quickly.
45. The trusting and constructive relationships between staff and pupils contribute much to pupils' sense of security and being valued. The procedures for health, safety, child protection and children in care are effectively implemented. The services of a full time nurse are used well and appreciated by pupils. Supervisory staff are very active. Senior staff and other teachers keep a close watch at the school gate at dismissal, because of the dangers of the very busy thoroughfare onto which pupils go. The absence of a needful pedestrian crossing is very noticeable.
46. Pupils receive good support and guidance. Academic assessment is used well for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to inform them about their progress, predicted and targeted examination grades, and to provide a focus for improvement. By Year 8, pupils are much less aware of the levels at which they are working, but become more aware in Year 9. Many in Year 8 are unsure about what standard they should aspire to, and the marking of their work in some subjects lacks enough guidance about how to improve. General homework support is available after school and a good range of revision classes supplement lessons. Mentoring support for Year 11 pupils and for those experiencing difficulties is very good. A necessary course in key skills for Year 7 has been introduced this year, but it is too early to assess its effectiveness.
47. Information, advice and guidance about option choices, post-16 courses and learning opportunities beyond school are very good. Pupils' views are sought and acted upon. The new electronic system for gathering assessment data has enabled the school to provide instant information to all teachers, to enable them to give appropriate levels of support to pupils. Tutors and subject teachers are able to use this information to monitor progress and discuss interim reports with students. Reports to parents are restricted in the amount of detail they contain. Those for students in Years 10 and 11 are better than in other years; containing predicted grades in addition to current levels of attainment. Few reports contain details of what students have achieved in subjects and which topics require improvement. Data are used well in Year 11 by learning mentors to identify students' strengths and weaknesses.
48. The needs of most pupils with special educational needs are known and planned for before they enter the school. Care plans are put in place very soon. The identification and assessment of these pupils are thorough and supported by regular review and re-testing. Liaison with primary schools from which pupils transfer starts in Year 5 and valuable links have been forged with these schools. Attainment levels for all are established through Group Literacy Assessments in July, prior to transfer. Pupils then receive appropriate support, ranging from paired reading to withdrawal from mainstream lessons, with one-to-one support for part of the week. Support is provided by teachers, special assistants and learning support assistants. The high quality of this team is apparent in most subjects. For example, in English, the support is very good and, in science, it is equally effective. However, support is not uniform across all departments. It is most effective in those departments where a support assistant has been assigned permanently to that particular subject area. However, there are some departments, such as music and modern foreign languages, where support is insufficient to meet pupils' needs. All support staff are well trained and very hard working. They liaise well with subject staff and keep careful records of pupils' progress.
49. A key issue at the last inspection concerned putting Individual Education Plans (IEPs) into place for pupils with special educational needs for whom these were required. The lack of IEPs has been fully addressed and all pupils now have detailed and useful profiles. ICT methods are being employed to improve teachers' input in the creation of targets. However, in some subjects, IEPs are in place, but are not used well enough to guide teachers' work with

individual pupils. The co-ordinator for special needs is now monitoring the use of IEPs more closely.

50. For pupils in the Integrated Resource Unit, statutory requirements for provision, as outlined in pupils' statements of need, are met and care is, overall, of high quality. Pupils have access to all areas of the curriculum and the school, with use of lifts and ramps, and staff and pupils provide occasional support for physically impaired pupils when necessary around the school. There are well-equipped medical and toilet facilities in all areas of the school. Special needs staff have undertaken specific training in order to support pupils; necessary facilities are in place in most parts of the school. Pupils with physical impairments participate in fieldwork and sporting activities, through provision of specialist transport and sports clubs. Pupils are happy and independent. The school has an accessibility plan in place.
51. The way in which all pupils with special educational needs, and particularly those with physical disabilities, are accepted and supported by staff and pupils is a good indicator of the inclusive nature of the school. Overall, care, support and guidance were judged good at the last inspection. They are even better now.

### **Sixth form**

52. Students are very well cared for. They receive very good advice, guidance and support. They express considerable confidence in their teachers and tutors. They are very well informed about opportunities within and beyond school, including advice and guidance on higher education and non-academic careers. Students receive timely and relevant support and guidance with their studies. They are well informed about the courses available in the sixth form and, with their parents, consult with tutors about the pathways that are available to them. The induction process on entry is very good and the students express appreciation with the way they are treated by sixth form staff. Procedures are in place to ensure that students' whereabouts are known. Students' views are respected and represented mainly through the students' committee.
53. Students' coursework is frequently reviewed and regularly assessed by their teachers and tutors. They are helped to understand the progress that they are making and what they have to do to achieve their desired results. Access to tutors for advice, and support with their work is very good and students consider that they receive all the help that they need. The new electronic system for gathering assessment data provides all teachers and tutors with a comprehensive view of students' attainments and targets. Tutors use these data to discuss progress with individual students and identify appropriate support needs. The head of sixth form has an overview of students' progress and responds to any reports of concern from departments regarding students' performance. Individual subject teachers provide almost instant support, which is valued highly by students.

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

The school has established a good partnership with parents. Links with other schools and the community are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have considerable confidence in the school and are very satisfied with it.
- Parents are frequently consulted and their views are taken into account.
- The school promotes sport very well in the community and with other schools.

## Commentary

54. Parents have a very good opinion of the school and are pleased with the quality of education and personal care that it gives to their children. The concern of a minority of parents about standards of behaviour is not fully justified; the large majority of pupils behave very well.
55. Some aspects of information provided for parents are good but others are not yet well developed, such as the school's website and curricular information for parents of pupils in Years 8 and 9. Pupils' strengths, weaknesses and targets for improvement are inconsistently identified and described across the range of subjects in annual school reports. Discussions during well attended parents' evenings usefully augment the content of the interim reports. Educational workshops are not yet an established feature of the school's service to parents.
56. The school successfully secures the support and cooperation of parents. Parents' views are frequently sought and are seriously considered as part of the process of evaluation and improvement.
57. Parents are fully included in the work of the special educational needs department. Attendance at pupils' reviews is good and the department is very flexible in its approach to meeting parents' concerns. There are very strong and productive links with a large range of outside agencies.
58. Statutory requirements for provision as outlined in statements of special educational need are met. Reviews of statements and Individual Education Plans are regular and effective, with contributions from teachers, parents and support staff. Parents are very involved with the work of the Integrated Resource Unit and diligent in supporting their children.
59. Links with other schools and the community are good. Sports skills and events are very effectively promoted and organised with other schools in the area. Satisfactory improvement has been made on the key issue of the last inspection which required the school to improve curricular links with primary schools. Some subject links are now strong – for example, in mathematics and in physical education. Good training opportunities for the staff of partner schools are provided. However, there remains room for improvement to enhance some subjects' links further with partner primary schools. Information for pupils and parents about transfer arrangements with colleges of further and higher education are good. Some use is made of links with the local college to provide vocational and other courses in the sixth form. The school has involved itself in the valuable initiative of a Leading Edge Partnership. (Leading Edge is replacing the school's current Beacon School status.) The new initiative is at an early stage.
60. Field trips are used well to enhance learning in lessons. Residential visits, including overseas, contribute very well to pupils' personal development. Business links with local employers and other organisations contribute much to the quality of learning in sport, design and technology, NVQ modern foreign language courses, and to work experience for pupils. The music department makes a strong contribution to musical activities in the community. Catholic charities are well supported by pupils.
61. Links with local business and industry are good. Interview training is given through well established professional links that include representatives from engineering, manufacturing and financial companies. Work placements are found for all pupils, although about half the pupils find their own.
62. Overall, the good links with parents and the community have been well maintained since the last inspection.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are good in the main school and in the sixth form. The leadership of the headteacher and his senior staff team is very good. Leadership of other areas of the school is good overall. Governance is very good in main school, but strategic direction for the future of the sixth form is not yet in final form. Management is good at all levels.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher and his senior team, with that of governors, provides the main school with clear strategic vision for its further development.
- Strategic direction for the further development of the sixth form is undecided.
- The leadership of subjects is good overall.
- Management at all levels is good.

### Commentary

63. The leadership of the school is good, overall. The headteacher, in partnership with his senior staff team, gives the school clear vision and strong direction. Planning for whole-school development is very good. The senior team has risen to the challenge of leading the school through a period of change, where teachers have had to adapt their methods of working to ensure that intakes of pupils of differing academic attainment continue to learn successfully. The emphasis on teaching and learning has enabled the school to strengthen further the good quality of teaching seen in the 1998 inspection. The headteacher, with the leadership team, leads by example and has worked hard to make subject leaders more effective in the review and evaluation of the quality of their educational provision and performance so that departments function more effectively. The headteacher is a forceful advocate and, although in post for one year only, has given subject departments and all staff a renewed sense of purpose and direction to improve further the standards achieved and the quality of educational provision. For example, the emphasis given by leadership to the enhancement of teachers' skills in the use of ICT in their teaching has much enhanced pupils' learning.
64. Governance was very good in 1998 and remains so. Governors remain firm maintainers of the ethos of the school as a Christian community within the tradition of the Catholic Church. They are fully committed to providing an education that meets the needs of all pupils. Since the inspection of 1998, governors have steered the school successfully out of Grant Maintained status. They have maintained a very close working relationship with the headteacher, as with his predecessor, to give the school clear, strategic direction. For example, governors have enabled the school to become a specialist in sport and physical education. After ten years' endeavour, they are about to acquire much needed new accommodation for sport. Latterly, they have ensured the school gained recognition as a Training School, and secured its participation in a Leading Edge partnership. Some governors link with specific areas of the school's work to inform themselves of standards and the quality of education provided. For example, there is strong support from the governing body for the co-ordinator of special educational needs and her staff team. However, most governors do not have such links to help extend further their understanding of the standards achieved and the quality of education provided.
65. The leadership of subject departments and tutor teams is good overall. It varies in quality between excellent and satisfactory. It is excellent in mathematics. Effective subject leaders have made the quality of teaching and learning a high priority and the most successful departments have enhanced teaching skills very well.
66. The leadership of the well trained and dedicated special educational needs team is good. The team is effectively managed to provide appropriate support programmes for all. Records and documentation are well organised and ways of improving further are constantly sought and followed through. The Integrated Resource Unit is located in special needs accommodation

and its management and teaching teams work well across both areas of care. Leadership and management of the Unit are sympathetic, efficient and successful in putting in place all the measures and facilities required to give the pupils with physical impairments a full education.

67. Management is good at all levels and gives pupils a good quality of education. An improving feature is the capacity to monitor, by the analysis of a wide variety of data, to assist subject departments' planning. The new database of information on pupils and subject performance is a valuable resource for use by departments and tutors. This includes analyses of attainment, relative performance and value-added information. Not all departments make enough use of this analytical data to direct teaching and learning most effectively. At whole-school level, targets set from data of performance for outcomes of 2004 GCSE examinations were inaccurate. However, senior management has training initiatives in place to enable departments to access these data and use them to improve teaching and learning. Senior management recognises the crucial importance of the staff. The school has recently attained status as a Training School, and it provides good professional induction for teachers in initial training, newly qualified and recently appointed teachers. Performance management is well established and there are very good opportunities for professional development. Monitoring of teaching is extensive, in addition to that which is part of the on-going process of performance management. The headteacher personally sees all teachers teach.
68. The school uses the funding available effectively. The financial difficulty of the change from Grant Maintained status was managed well to avoid a budgetary deficit. Additional funding for Leading Edge initiatives and Training School activities has been achieved and will further support the school's development of the quality of teaching and learning. Money is spent on the pupils for whom it is provided, and there is very little contingency. The school applies the principles of best value well. It makes close comparison of its performance with that of other schools, and analyses outcomes carefully, to determine that achievement is good. However, it remains determined to raise the standards achieved further in the interest of all the pupils. It provides good challenge to pupils with a good curriculum and additional learning opportunities. Consultation with parents is very good, and increasingly good with pupils. Its financial systems are very well managed to ensure effective competition for the services it buys. In general, the school is effective in giving pupils a good quality of education. It gives good value for money.

## Financial information

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

| Income and expenditure (£) |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Total income               | 4,706,576 |
| Total expenditure          | 4,701,443 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 4,045     |

| Balances (£)                        |       |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Balance from previous year          | 339   |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 5,471 |

## Sixth form

69. The leadership of the sixth form is good overall. The sixth form is a popular option for students at age 16. The number of students has more than doubled since the inspection in 1998. However, the accommodation is similar to what was provided then. Governors have not planned as rigorously for the strategic development of the sixth form to the extent that they have done for the main school. Curricular changes are in train across ages 14 to 19 years, and any further increase in the numbers of students would stretch the accommodation too far. Governors are determined to improve the accommodation further and discussions are ongoing with the local authority to this end.

70. Management is good overall. An improved feature is the use of assessment data. A system now provides computerised recording and analyses of each student's performance. The system provides data from GCSE examination results on which each student's targets are based. This information and the efficient analyses of examination performances by subjects give departments essential information to guide them to respond well to trends in attainment. Day-to-day management of the sixth form is efficient.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work Related Learning in Years 10 and 11**

The effectiveness of work related learning (WRL) is **good**.

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

- Standards in WRL are above those usually found nationally. Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning opportunities are well recognised and used.
- Good strategies are in place to support WRL, although not all subject areas have identified their contribution well enough.

#### **Commentary**

71. Overall, standards in WRL are above those usually found, nationally. A few pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a 'Workstart' GCSE examination programme at the local college. They achieve satisfactory results in English, mathematics and science and at the same time benefit from a broad range of work experience opportunities. Boys and girls of differing competence from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds achieve well. Curricular change in Years 10 and 11 has introduced both school-based, and vocational courses taken in other institutions. These courses are at an early stage of development, but provide an extensive range of opportunities. They include: applied GCSE examination courses in leisure and tourism; a first level BTEC sport and physical education course; a Football Association referees' course; advanced and first level NVQ vocational courses. Further alternative curricular provision involves specialist support for talented individuals competing in sport at national level and in the performing arts.
72. Many pupils have a good breadth of knowledge and understanding and can apply these to work-related situations. In Year 10, the pupils' knowledge, understanding and key skills are above those expected at this early stage in the first term of the school year. For example, pupils research, analyse, synthesise and evaluate information from the Internet in health and social care. Higher attainers consider how to identify depression or cancer and discuss issues confidently. Less competent pupils also improve their research skills and pupils with special educational needs gain a basic knowledge of diabetes and anorexia.
73. Teaching is good. Enthusiastic and effective teaching in Year 10 helps pupils to work independently on their chosen research topics. Pupils are given the responsibility to carry out learning tasks with initiative and independence. This engages pupils in practical learning of many kinds - for example, Year 10's work experience involved learning how to erect scaffolding. Pupils respond very well to the practical learning opportunities provided. During work experience, pupils were fully engaged and work placements have produced some good understanding of working practices. Pupils evaluate this experience for their Record of Achievement. Most find the experience worthwhile to the planning of their future careers, and report that they feel more confident once they understood what was expected of them in work situations. However, some were bored by the repetitive and simplistic nature of the work that they were given.

74. Careers guidance is a high priority. The school has gained a national award for the quality of the guidance it provides for its pupils. Interviews are arranged in conjunction with Connexions in Year 11. ICT is often used for careers information and advice.
75. The school careers department and Connexions manage WRL effectively. They encourage pupils to apply the knowledge, understanding and skills learned - for example, in sport and food technology, to the workplace. An audit of provision has been undertaken and there is an increasing awareness of WRL through staff training.



## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

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

All references throughout the report to 'average', 'above average' or 'below average' etc refer to comparisons with national standards. 2004 results are not yet validated nationally, but reference is made to them below.

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Boys' standards are regularly above the average attained by boys nationally.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes ensure that they achieve well.
- The number of entries for the GCSE examination in English Literature is well below average.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support.

#### Commentary

76. In 2003, standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests fell below those in similar schools, having been well above in 2002. In 2003, results were in line with those gained in science and below those in mathematics. Standards returned to their former levels in 2004. Contrary to the national picture, boys are regularly further above the average for their gender than are girls. In 2003, pupils' performance in the English GCSE examination was above average. In the attainment of grades A\* to C, girls were below average for their gender group, whilst boys were well above for theirs. Overall, results at grades A\* to C were lower in 2004 with fewer high grades than in 2003. Boys outperformed girls. GCSE examination English Literature results are consistently well above average, although fewer than one third of pupils typically study for this examination.
77. Pupils' standards on entry to the school are average. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were above average by Year 9. Standards by Year 11 were average at this early stage in the school year. Pupils' speaking skills are good and come from frequent opportunities in lessons to discuss, collaborate and explore ideas. Although most students can read aloud competently, some have problems in understanding their reading because of a poor vocabulary and their failure to recognise implicit meanings. In all years, creative writing is lively and entertaining, although some critical writing in literature and media tends to be descriptive rather than analytical. The most competent pupils in Year 11 write cogently and accurately. The less competent have difficulty in sustaining an argument and their vocabulary, punctuation and spelling are below the standard typically found.
78. Overall, the achievement by pupils of differing competence from all ethnic, social and religious backgrounds is good. It is helped considerably by students' very positive attitudes and desire to succeed. However, there is underachievement by some girls, especially in GCSE examinations. Insufficient lesson time for the subject, and low numbers entering the literature course contribute to this. All pupils use computers to improve their writing, research and skills of presentation. Opportunities to enrich the learning of gifted and talented pupils through a range of extra-curricular activities are good, but those for other students are under-developed. Students with special educational needs receive support of high quality and achieve well.

79. Teaching and learning are good overall. The teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is particularly impressive. The very good teaching is well planned and ensures rewarding and enjoyable learning. There are choices and challenges and, when necessary, lower attaining pupils receive well-designed prompt sheets. The less successful lessons are too teacher-directed and do not fully involve students in their own learning. Some staff make insufficient use of test and GCSE examination assessment information to plan appropriate learning experiences.
80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Departmental commitment is strong and responsibilities well delegated. However, there is no clear strategy to address girls' recent underperformance; robust systems for the regular monitoring of teaching and marking are not fully implemented. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Boys now perform better than girls and ICT provision has much improved, but still relatively few pupils take the GCSE examination course in literature and reading for pleasure has declined.

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

81. Literacy standards are average. Speaking and listening are above average because students are given many opportunities to explain and discuss their ideas. Students listen patiently and well, but are least competent in reading. Although reading for information is average, middle and lower attaining pupils sometimes require help to understand their textbooks. Writing is also average. Most students can construct sentences properly by Year 11, but spelling and grammar, even by some high attainers, are often careless and the choice of vocabulary is inappropriate.
82. Teaching is satisfactory, although the quality of planning and correcting of work is inconsistent within and across departments. Some teachers are still developing structured worksheets to help students with their writing. However, there is very good practice, for instance, in physical education, where pupils produce extended writing and diaries. In history, note-taking is well taught. Science teachers also encourage creative writing, but opportunities are sometimes missed in other subjects. The attachment of teaching and learning assistants to departments is supporting literacy needs well.
83. The National Strategy has been well introduced, but not all subject leaders monitor it closely nor share their experiences and successes with the whole staff. The effectiveness of the teaching of progress units, taught to Year 7 students who are at level 3 and below, is still being evaluated. Paired reading schemes, English library lessons, summer schools and a commendable literacy partnership with a small minority of parents supplement this Year 7 work. Few departments make effective use of the well run library, and there is no reading-for-pleasure culture within the school.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The department is very well led.
- GCSE examination results should be better.
- The curriculum is inclusive and enriched by exchanges and study visits.
- Assessment is not used effectively enough to raise achievement.

## **Commentary**

84. Pupils enter the school with no experience of modern foreign languages and below typical capability. In Years 7 to 9, girls and boys of differing competence from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds, achieve satisfactorily in Spanish or in French, but attain standards below those usually found nationally. Pupils in the Year 9 fast-track class who are following the GCSE examination course achieve very well.
85. Most pupils continue to study a language in Years 10 and 11. They attain below average standards by Year 11, but achieve satisfactorily. In 2002 and 2003, GCSE examination results were below average in French and above average in Spanish. Boys outperformed girls in Spanish. In 2004, results remained at a similar level in French, but declined severely in Spanish, owing largely to staffing difficulties. Few pupils have taken two foreign languages in GCSE examinations.
86. Most pupils behave very well, but the attitudes of a significant minority of boys in Year 11 are unsatisfactory and lead to their underachievement.
87. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, and good in Years 7 to 9, in both languages. Teachers use ICT regularly to support learning and increasingly use interactive whiteboards effectively. In the most successful lessons, teachers speak the foreign language extensively and expect pupils to do likewise. They use a variety of challenging, well-sequenced activities, which engage the interest of pupils. In other lessons, although teaching is thorough, the pace is too slow and pupils are passive learners. Work is not always closely matched to individual needs.
88. The department is very well led, with vision and purpose, and satisfactorily managed, although assessment information is not yet effectively used to set targets and raise achievement. The department's leaders are very good role models. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The curriculum is inclusive and innovative, and is enriched by exchanges and study visits. The committed team of expert linguists is capable of making further rapid improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management of the subject are excellent.
- Teaching is very good and results in pupils' good achievement.
- GCSE examination and National Curriculum test results are above the national averages.
- Marking of pupils' work does not provide comments on how they can improve.

## **Commentary**

89. Year 9 National Curriculum test results in 2004 continued the rising trend of above average results of recent years, and represented good achievement by pupils. Results are usually above those of similar schools. Boys' results were similar to those of girls. In 2003, results were above those in science and in English. In 2004, Year 11 GCSE examination results were lower than in 2003, but were above the national average of recent years, representing good achievement for pupils. Boys reached standards above those of girls, especially at the higher grades.
90. Current achievement in lessons is good. Standards are above those expected for all classes, irrespective of whether they are designated to be of higher or lower attainment. By the end of Year 9, this represents good progress for pupils, when compared to their attainment on entry

to Year 7. By the end of Year 11, pupils are achieving well. Results, already gained in GCSE modular mathematics examinations, indicate above average attainment. The most competent pupils have already attained good pass grades in the GCSE examination in statistics while in Year 10, and have gained very high grades in the examination modules already taken. The quality of work seen reflects pupils' very good attitudes to learning. Very good presentation of work, with suitable mathematical rigour in methodology, aids pupils' understanding and their

capacity to tackle more advanced questions. There is no difference in the achievement of pupils from different ethnic, religious or social backgrounds. Low attainers and those with special educational needs make good progress.

91. Teaching is very good. Enthusiastic teachers use a wide variety of teaching styles to develop pupils' interest and participation in their learning. Very good subject knowledge enables teachers to plan lessons which encourage pupils to work at a challenging pace, resulting in good learning. Good use is made of the 'three-part lesson' technique to develop and check pupils' understanding of what they are learning. Learning support is well planned and very effective during lessons. This enhances learning opportunities for all. Assessment during lessons is very effective and teachers respond rapidly to pupils' difficulties. The marking of pupils' work is accurate and regular but there are no comments on what pupils need to do to improve.
92. Excellent leadership and management of the department have ensured pupils receive teaching of very good quality and that their progress is constantly monitored against their individual targets. Teachers work well as a team and support the ethos of innovation and continuing professional development. The department has attained 'lead' status within the local consortium of schools, with which it shares best practice.
93. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Lesson time in Year 8 has been improved and ICT has been introduced into pupils' experience. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been successfully implemented.

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

94. Pupils' mathematical skills are above those expected nationally and support their learning well in other subjects. In science subjects, pupils use graphs and a wide variety of measures and equations in their calculations. Geography lessons develop pupils' graphic and ICT skills well when presenting data. During history lessons, pupils carry out surveys and analyse data using charts and graphs of high quality. During ICT lessons, pupils can enter formulae into spreadsheets and produce a variety of graphs using computers. There has been whole-school training in the development of pupils' numeracy across the curriculum. All departments have numeracy policies. The numeracy co-ordinator is maintaining the high profile of numeracy development by producing a weekly challenge sheet for use during tutorial periods.

#### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

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

- Good teaching engages students' interest and support from technicians is outstanding.
- Leadership and management are very good and science has a positive image with pupils.
- Standards are above those usually found nationally at the end of Year 9, but are below at the end of Year 11, although achievement in all years is good.

## Commentary

95. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests were in line with the national average in 2003 and better than those in similar schools. Results improved slightly in 2004 when there was no noticeable difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Results in the GCSE double award examinations in 2003 were below average, and lower still in 2004. Typically, one or two classes do three separate science subjects, and almost all gain grades A\* to C. A very small group of pupils with special educational needs follows an entry level course with success.
96. There is no difference in the performance of pupils whatever their social, ethnic or religious backgrounds. Standards seen during the inspection by the end of Year 9 are generally above those expected nationally, and pupils achieve well. Pupils in Year 7 quickly develop practical skills in using the Bunsen burner. Standards by the end of Year 11 are satisfactory and achievement remains good. Less competent pupils in Year 11 work very well together and are very confident in their work on the topic of 'breathing'.
97. The quality of teaching and learning in science is good overall, with some very good and outstanding practice. The clear explanation of learning objectives and the successful use of starter and plenary activities are well developed from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Thorough and detailed planning of lessons with effective and illustrated presentations and focused questioning help pupils to learn well. Many respond with energy and enthusiasm.
98. The leadership and management of the new head of department are very good. Documentation is clear and helpful and organisation is very effective and supportive. He manages people with sensitivity and the team of teachers and other colleagues are very well supported. There is a keen sense of purpose in the department and teachers' knowledge and understanding of science are good. However, the monitoring and sharing of good practice are not yet sufficiently developed. The team of two technicians provides excellent support to practical activities.
99. Since the last inspection there have been major changes in staffing and responsibilities, which have brought about satisfactory improvement in the way the science curriculum is organised. All courses have been reviewed and updated, and greatly improved ICT facilities are now in use. However, in the lower school, there is a shortage of the day-to-day processes of problem-solving and inquiry, and of the excitement of discovery. Pupils' work is on display throughout the department and supports its popular and positive image.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but standards are rising.
- Teaching is good, enhanced by very good use of digital technology.
- The use of assessment to promote learning is unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

100. On entry to the school, pupils' skills are at the expected level. By the end of Year 9 in 2004, standards were below national expectations, but considerably better than in 2003. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, partly because until very recently insufficient timetabled time was devoted to ICT. By the end of Year 11 in 2003, pupils' GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) examination results were below the national average. In 2004, the results of the first group to complete the newly adopted GCSE examination course were below typical national average standards. However, pupils make sound progress and achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11.

101. Standards of work seen by pupils from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds were of a generally higher standard than past results, and confirm an improving trend. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, but the progress made by the most talented pupils is unsatisfactory throughout Years 7 to 11 because they are not adequately stretched by the work set. The work of Year 8 pupils during last year was of a typical national standard. Pupils' skills in selecting and presenting information are better developed than those of data handling and modelling. Boys make better progress than girls, except in the new short GCSE examination course.
102. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They make very good use of interactive whiteboards and other resources, and effectively combine interactive teaching with pupils' practical application. They give pupils insufficient opportunities to work together, or to conduct independent research. Teachers give their time freely outside school hours and provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills further. Pupils respond well and work hard. Assessment is unsatisfactory. The quality of marking varies too much, and National Curriculum levels are not always accurately applied in Years 7 to 9. Most pupils do not understand well enough how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
103. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has high expectations and is striving to raise standards further. However, the focus on improvement has not been as sharp as it should have been, partly because of the many changes of course in Years 10 and 11. These year groups have a wide range of ICT courses available, but pupils are occasionally allowed to choose a course unsuited to their talents. The staff team works well together and there are enough data to enable evaluation of performance. However, use of the data is still at an early stage. Schemes of work for the many ICT courses lack detail to support teachers' planning of lessons. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory, with much accomplished in the last two years. All pupils now follow an ICT course in Years 10 and 11; however, achievement has not yet risen. ICT resources have greatly improved and now represent a notable strength.

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

104. The last inspection report noted that there was insufficient use of ICT in other subjects. As a result of focused strategic planning and determined action by senior managers since the appointment of the new headteacher, the situation has improved dramatically. There has been substantial investment in: wireless networking; the provision of desktop and laptop computers; interactive whiteboards; software and staff training.
105. ICT resources across the school are now very good, as is staff confidence and skills in using the technology. Teachers routinely use ICT to make lessons more lively. These were the right priorities and, although the use of ICT by pupils to enhance their learning of other subjects is not yet so widespread, it is already good in Years 10 and 11. Practice is best in mathematics and design and technology, where there is also an emphasis on introducing pupils to new software and extending their skills. As yet, these developments have had little or no impact in music, however. The leadership and management of cross-curricular ICT are excellent.
106. An imaginative arrangement for teaching ICT through English, mathematics, science, history and geography has been introduced very recently. Outcomes cannot yet be evaluated to determine whether the new arrangements will meet National Curriculum requirements as well as previous provision has done.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and teaching, backed by very good fieldwork and use of ICT, lead to high achievement, by boys in particular.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 and monitoring of standards are not sufficiently well developed.

#### Commentary

107. On entry to the school, pupils' skills and knowledge in geography are below those typical nationally. By the end of Year 9, pupils - regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion - reach standards in line with those expected nationally. This represents good achievement. Basic geographical and numerical skills are put in place and pupils' written skills develop well. Their enquiry skills, seen in projects such as a Year 8 investigation of Antarctica, also develop well. Much work is enhanced by good use of ICT. Standards by the end of Year 11 further improve and are above average. Results in the GCSE examination in 2003 were above average, with boys doing very well at the grades A\* to C. The situation was similar in 2004. Although their standards are improving, girls do not attain as well as boys in GCSE examinations. However, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well by Year 11.
108. Much success relates to the effective development of pupils' investigative skills. They are able to gather data, analyse and hypothesise to draw well-supported conclusions, as in coursework on contrasting residential areas of Sheffield. Lower attainers benefit from using appropriately selected materials and all are able to gain knowledge of geographical processes and patterns, illustrated by good case studies. Across all year groups there is a steady growth in pupils' independent thinking and working.
109. Teaching and learning are good across Years 7 to 11. The subject is presented to pupils in an interesting way and constantly reinforced through good questioning and use of varied activities and materials. The teachers' skills in ICT techniques add considerably to the quality of learning in lessons. Girls and boys learn equally well in lessons, but some girls are not completing coursework effectively enough.
110. The subject is well led and satisfactorily managed. Good progress has been made in the comprehensive fieldwork programme by an expert and united team. However, assessment in Years 7 to 9 and the monitoring of standards are under-developed. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with good features retained, but with insufficient advance in assessment practice.

### History

Provision in history is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and GCSE examination results are consistently well above average.
- Teaching is enthusiastic but does not always inform pupils well enough how to improve their work.
- The department is very well led and there is good use of ICT.

## Commentary

111. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their standards are similar to those usually found nationally. By the end of Year 9, girls and boys of differing ability from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds make good progress and reach above typical national standards. Consequently, pupils of all levels of competence, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and gain a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, Year 9 pupils use historical evidence skilfully to identify the dangers for children working in the cotton mills in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
112. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average and GCSE examination results are consistently well above the national average, although fewer pupils than expected gained an A\* or A grade in 2004. Boys, in particular, do very well. This represents very good achievement over the two years of the course for boys and for girls of all levels of competence, including those with special needs, from all ethnic backgrounds. During the inspection, pupils were seen to reach standards well above those typical nationally. They gain a very good knowledge and understanding of history. Middle and higher attaining pupils are able to analyse and then explain complex historical issues clearly - for example, how the British people's reaction changed towards preparations for war in 1914 and in 1939. Pupils make clear and often concise notes and their coursework is of a high standard.
113. The teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are often at least good, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned to enthuse pupils' learning through the use of ICT and the handling of historical materials. Pupils respond very well and learn effectively from independent study and work in small groups, particularly in Years 10 and 11. However, as in the last inspection, some teaching does not sufficiently match the needs of lower attaining pupils to record their work well enough in Years 7 to 9. Support assistants work well with teachers to ensure that pupils learn successfully.
114. The subject is very well led and managed. The department has a positive ethos and the departmental team is determined to maintain high standards. There is regular monitoring of classroom practice. However, in Years 7 to 9 assessment is not used well enough to inform pupils as to how to improve their work and attain higher National Curriculum levels. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain good GCSE examination results.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge has a positive impact on standards and achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The curriculum and the system of assessment for pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not lead to attainment at higher levels.

## Commentary

115. By the end of Year 9, the standards of work of girls and boys from all social and ethnic backgrounds are at the level generally expected nationally. Their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils of all levels of competence have satisfactory practical skills and can formulate a design brief and analyse a problem. They have a good understanding of how computers can be



used as design tools. However, they have insufficient skills in developing their own product-design ideas. The course structure does not enable more competent pupils to work at higher levels.

116. GCSE examination results for 2004 were above typical national standards, and represent good achievement. In 2003, results were well above the national average. The trend in results has risen since the last inspection. The standard of pupils' work is above what might reasonably be expected. In lessons, standards are currently at the expected level. All pupils were seen to carry out research into a design problem to a satisfactory standard, but courses were at an early stage in the school year at the time of the inspection. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds did not achieve as well as predicted in 2004 examinations, and girls' achievement also fell in these examinations. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Staff are well aware of their special needs and give sensitive support.
117. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils' very good attitudes to work contribute to good learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they apply well in Years 10 and 11, for example, when directing questions to further pupils' understanding. Teachers are skilled in using computer technology to support pupils' learning. Teaching is less effective when pupils are given few opportunities to contribute to discussion.
118. The department is well led and managed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department is involved in a wide range of initiatives, some of which make a significant contribution to work-related learning. The very good range of GCSE examination courses leads to high levels of inclusive opportunities for pupils. Planning of courses for Years 7 to 9 does not enable the pupils to work at higher levels and teachers' assessments of these pupils are inaccurate. However, these two issues have already been identified as areas for development by the department.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in all years because of the consistently good teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not yet use ICT to develop work.
- Pupils are well prepared for GCSE examinations.

### **Commentary**

119. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above the national average. Girls' results were particularly strong. Results have risen for several years until 2004, when they fell back to standards below those of the previous year. This reflected a changed profile of recruitment to the course. The school's analysis shows that many of these pupils gained their highest grade in art and design.
120. The standards of work of the pupils in Year 7 who have just entered the school are typical of those found nationally. By Year 9, pupils reach standards that exceed national expectations. Pupils from all social, religious and ethnic backgrounds achieve well because they follow a well structured course, which focuses on establishing and developing art-making skills. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well because they are well supported. Boys and girls can draw well from observation in a range of media and make well considered compositions around a theme. Pupils do not yet use ICT to develop their work.

121. Pupils who choose to study art and design to GCSE examination level achieve well and reach standards above national expectations. There is strength in two-dimensional techniques, including graphic design. More competent pupils produce well presented written and illustrated studies of the life and work of artists. Year 10 pupils studying graphics make very good use of ICT to develop and refine their work. They have produced computer animations of high quality, following a visit by a professional animator. Pupils are less able to explore abstract ideas and issues through their work.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers are expert and knowledgeable. They ensure that pupils are well prepared for the GCSE examination. They use demonstration very well to teach or reinforce techniques, so that pupils become increasingly competent. The quality of ongoing and informal assessments is good, but the intervals between formal assessments are too long. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve.
123. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Results are rigorously analysed and there is a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. Monitoring of teaching is not systematic. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Inadequate development planning hinders the achievement of pupils.
- Achievement is restricted by inadequate opportunities for practical musical activity in the curriculum.
- There are very good opportunities for enrichment outside the classroom, and some very high standards in this work.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.

### **Commentary**

124. Year 7 pupils who have just entered the school have standards generally below those expected nationally. By the end of Year 9, girls and boys from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds reach standards that are also below those expected nationally. However, this represents satisfactory achievement in the first three years pupils are in the school. Pupils in Year 7 have restricted musical knowledge. Their practical work is under-developed. By the end of Year 9, they have acquired some keyboard techniques and have studied a range of composers and styles, although they do not always remember what they learned in lessons.
125. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, standards were below national averages. Recent results indicate that the same is likely to be the case in 2004. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are average. Overall, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. The lack of resources and a theoretical approach to the teaching of composition in the early stages of the course result in higher attainers achieving better than lower attainers.
126. Teaching and learning in all years are satisfactory overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and explain concepts clearly and accurately. Relationships are good because teachers are confident and assertive and expect high standards of behaviour. Unsatisfactory accommodation and timetabling lead to a lack of regular opportunity for pupils to engage enough in practical music-making. Practical work is also restricted when teachers talk for too long. The emphasis on musical theory is not appropriate to the needs of lower attainers. Work is marked regularly, although pupils are not told what they have achieved, and what they need to do to improve. The lack of computers in the department restricts achievement, particularly for pupils who are not confident in using written notation.

127. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with much strength, and some significant weaknesses. Teachers provide positive role models. Extra-curricular work is very well developed. The standard attained by the school band is very high. The annual school production engages large numbers of pupils, staff and parents. There is good provision of instrumental tuition. The planning of the curriculum is poor. Insufficient attention is paid to ensuring that pupils of all abilities and aptitudes have positive musical experiences and can achieve well. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory, because the weaknesses in management which were identified then have not been resolved.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education and sport**

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

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

- Pupils achieve very well because of consistently good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils.
- Very good leadership and management are committed to further improvement.
- Pupils have insufficient knowledge of how to improve their levels of performance.
- The delivery of the 'three part lesson' approach is inconsistent.
- The school's specialist status for sport is ensuring very good external links.

#### **Commentary**

128. Year 7 pupils who have just entered the school are at a standard generally below that usually found at this age. By Year 9, they achieve well and reach national expectations. Many pupils make very good progress and are above national expectations by Year 9. Overall, pupils have very good control, balance and co-ordination. Less secure are pupils' knowledge of health, fitness and how to improve their performance.
129. Standards and achievement in Year 11 and in the GCSE examination course are well above expectations. Girls and boys from all social and religious backgrounds, and those with special educational needs achieve well, and by the end of Year 11 perform better than in most other school subjects. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve very well and gain very good standards in GCSE examinations.
130. By Year 11, pupils' knowledge and skills are further refined to include a very good understanding of tactics in games. Pupils who follow the GCSE examination course make very good progress in theory, demonstrating a very secure knowledge of sports injuries and their treatment. Coursework demonstrates very good understanding of the components of fitness. Satisfactory standards are being attained in the Year 10 pilot BTEC course.
131. Teaching and learning are good overall, and often very good. Together with the very good attitudes shown by pupils, good teaching and learning ensure the attainment of the well above average standards. Very good relationships in lessons create a secure environment for learning. Teachers' very good subject knowledge results in a very appropriate mix of learning drills in lessons. Computers are used well in classes doing theoretical work. Inconsistencies exist in the use of challenging questioning, the use of the 'three-part lesson', and the extent of teacher-led input.
132. Very good leadership and management have resulted in a shared commitment to improvement. There is a pro-active approach to planning. The vision for the subject is witnessed by the development of the school as a specialist for sport and physical education, and has resulted in very good links with local schools and the community. Improvement since

the last inspection has been very good. Well above average standards, very good achievement in Years 10 and 11 and a very good curriculum are apparent. Medium-term planning has been thoroughly reviewed, although guidance for staff about expected levels of work is not fully in place. Assessment includes pupil self-evaluation, but more guidance is required to ensure that pupils have better knowledge of expected levels of work and how to improve.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

133. Business education was inspected in full. Health and social care, leisure and tourism and child development were sampled.
134. In **health and social care**, two lessons were sampled. In Year 10, pupils are already developing good independent learning skills and take obvious pride in their work. Year 11 pupils find the work related aspects of the course motivating. Teaching is good and effective, and pupils achieve well.
135. In leisure and tourism, one lesson was sampled. This is a new course in Year 10. Most pupils have lower than average levels of prior attainment. They are motivated by the use of ICT for research, and by visits to different leisure facilities near to the school. They are making good progress with the positive support of their teachers. Two lessons were observed in child development. Standards are average. Lessons are well planned to meet pupils' needs. All pupils benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge, and an effective choice of activities stimulates pupils' interest and helps them to learn. Pupils with special educational needs work particularly well with a teaching assistant and carefully prepare resources that help them to learn.

### **Business education**

Provision in business is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE examination results are improving.
- Year 11 pupils learn well because of their very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Achievement is improving because of good teaching and resources and well chosen learning tasks.
- Marking does not always give enough information to pupils about how to improve.
- Strategies for raising attainment are not yet detailed enough.

### **Commentary**

136. Standards in business studies are above average. The 2003 GCSE examination results rose significantly over those of 2002 in the attainment of an above average percentage of grades A\* to C. Girls continued to attain better than boys but the difference was narrowing. A substantial majority of pupils from minority-ethnic backgrounds achieve at, and often above, the standards that might reasonably be expected, given their prior attainment. The GNVQ foundation results were above average in 2003, and most pupils attained merit or distinction, creditable achievement for pupils with lower than average prior attainment at the start of the course. There was a slight fall in higher grades in the unvalidated GCSE examination results in 2004. Results in the applied GCSE double award examination were well below those of the single award, and this applied course has now been withdrawn.
137. Overall, standards of work seen in the inspection were at the expected standard for the course. The more competent pupils attained above expected standards for the course. Pupils' achievement is good. Year 11 pupils achieve very well. Their positive attitudes and

enjoyment of work promote their understanding of market research. Written work is well organised. Year 10 pupils make satisfactory progress in understanding the influence of stakeholders on a business.

138. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to prepare electronic resources that interest and motivate pupils. Pupils effectively search the Internet for up-to-date business information to enhance their learning. Teachers expect much of their pupils. They monitor pupils' progress well and target support to lower achievers. Extension tasks challenge the more competent pupils. Oral questions do not always ensure the response of all pupils. Work is marked frequently and celebrates success well, but there is not enough written guidance to pupils where work is incorrect or incomplete. Teachers' classroom management is good.
139. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed subject leader has a strong sense of purpose. Professional development is used well to further the success of the department. Target setting is well established and motivates pupils. Data analysis is very good, but strategies for raising attainment are not tightly focused on measurable objectives and outcomes. Opportunities for pupils to learn about business at first hand are developing well.

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

### **Personal and social education and guidance**

#### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

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

- Pupils' self-evaluation is well established.
- Monitoring of what the subject is providing is under-developed.
- Medium-term planning insufficiently shows expected levels and progression.
- Curricular time is insufficient for teachers to assess pupils' progress and to give them the necessary depth of subject knowledge and understanding.

#### **Commentary**

140. Pupils from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. Girls and boys meet nationally expected standards by the ends of Years 9 and 11.
141. Year 7 pupils satisfactorily develop knowledge of their school environment. By Year 9, this has extended to include globalisation. Achievement in a Year 11 lesson was unsatisfactory, when insufficient opportunities were given to develop pupils' understanding about law-making, or apply it to the school context. Pupils satisfactorily develop communication skills in class discussions and writing. The use of computers in citizenship lessons is under-developed.
142. Pupils enjoyed the elections for the school council, which is shortly to meet for the first time. This is an important development in helping pupils to understand the democratic process. Other good opportunities exist for pupils to participate in the school and wider community, as when Year 8 pupils act as school receptionists. The subject has yet to develop an effective method of recording the extent and development of pupils' participation.
143. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In one excellent lesson, the teacher was very skilled at relating the learning to examples from real life. An excellent plenary session brought

together the main learning points for the pupils. Good relationships in classes ensure that pupils feel secure and confident to offer views and opinions. In less successful lessons, unchallenging work is set, and the time and range for discussion is restricted. Teachers have not been trained to teach citizenship; consequently the quality of teaching varies too much.

144. Leadership is satisfactory. Much has been achieved in a short time. However, management is unsatisfactory. Curricular planning is not developed enough to show progression and expected levels of work. The curriculum has been thoroughly examined to identify where aspects of citizenship are taught in other subjects, but the monitoring of its delivery is under-developed. The lesson time allocated to discrete lessons in citizenship is too little to allow for the full development of the syllabus, and hinders teachers' opportunity to assess pupils' achievement satisfactorily. Pupils carry out self-assessment, but, overall, assessment is under-developed.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine 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, the latest year for which national comparisons are validated.

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses (results are of Year 13 students in 2003 only)*

| Subject               | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E |         | % gaining grades A-B |         | Average point score |         |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|                       |                | School               | England | School               | England | School              | England |
| Art and design        | 9              | 90                   | 80      | 22                   | 24      | 27.8                | 29.9    |
| Biology               | 6              | 67                   | 65      | 33                   | 11      | 25.0                | 20.6    |
| Business Studies      | 7              | 57                   | 76      | 0                    | 16      | 12.9                | 26.2    |
| Chemistry             | 6              | 33                   | 73      | 0                    | 34      | 6.7                 | 24.1    |
| English Literature    | 11             | 91                   | 86      | 9                    | 19      | 27.3                | 30.2    |
| Design and Technology | 6              | 83                   | 75      | 33                   | 15      | 35.0                | 25.3    |
| General Studies       | 8              | 87                   | 74      | 0                    | 18      | 17.5                | 25.7    |
| Geography             | 10             | 70                   | 74      | 20                   | 20      | 25.0                | 26.5    |
| History               | 10             | 100                  | 81      | 0                    | 19      | 30                  | 29      |
| Mathematics           | 11             | 54                   | 62      | 36                   | 17      | 25.5                | 22.1    |
| Other Social Studies  | 17             | 53                   | 70      | 18                   | 17      | 18.2                | 24.1    |
| Physics               | 10             | 60                   | 69      | 0                    | 14      | 14.0                | 22.7    |
| Religious Studies     | 4              | 100                  | 80      | 0                    | 23      | 30.0                | 29.8    |
| Sociology             | 3              | 100                  | 72      | 0                    | 18      | 26.7                | 25.4    |

|                   |   |    |    |   |    |     |      |
|-------------------|---|----|----|---|----|-----|------|
| Sports/PE Studies | 3 | 33 | 73 | 0 | 11 | 6.7 | 23.1 |
|-------------------|---|----|----|---|----|-----|------|

### **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 |
| Art and design        | 7              | 100                  | 99      | 14                   | 50      | 68.6                | 87.5    |
| Biology               | 19             | 100                  | 96      | 21                   | 39      | 66.3                | 78.6    |
| Business Studies      | 14             | 100                  | 99      | 29                   | 37      | 70.0                | 80.1    |
| Chemistry             | 9              | 100                  | 98      | 56                   | 49      | 88.9                | 84.9    |
| English Literature    | 15             | 100                  | 99      | 73                   | 46      | 93.3                | 86.5    |
| French                | 5              | 100                  | 99      | 80                   | 51      | 100.0               | 87.6    |
| Design and Technology | 8              | 100                  | 98      | 37                   | 35      | 85.0                | 77.9    |
| General Studies       | 69             | 96                   | 95      | 26                   | 31      | 70.4                | 33.1    |
| Geography             | 21             | 100                  | 99      | 71                   | 44      | 95.2                | 84.0    |
| History               | 22             | 100                  | 99      | 59                   | 45      | 86.4                | 84.6    |
| Mathematics           | 25             | 100                  | 97      | 44                   | 56      | 87.2                | 88.8    |
| Music                 | 1              | 100                  | 99      | 0                    | 39      | 80.0                | 81.1    |
| Other Social Studies  | 26             | 77                   | 97      | 15                   | 43      | 54.6                | 81.8    |
| Physics               | 6              | 100                  | 97      | 67                   | 45      | 96.7                | 81.7    |
| Religious Studies     | 7              | 100                  | 99      | 29                   | 47      | 77.1                | 85.6    |
| Sociology             | 8              | 75                   | 98      | 25                   | 44      | 62.5                | 83.6    |
| Spanish               | 9              | 100                  | 98      | 56                   | 50      | 86.7                | 86.9    |
| Sports/PE Studies     | 11             | 100                  | 98      | 27                   | 31      | 76.4                | 75.2    |

*The inspection was conducted very early in the Autumn Term and little sixth form work was available to be seen from students currently in Year 12.*

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English**

Provision in English Literature is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well.
- Year 13 students are reaching very good standards.
- The department provides few enrichment opportunities for students.

### **Commentary**

145. A-level results in 2003 were well above average. In 2004 they were much lower; all students passed but only one third gained the highest grades. However, most students achieved well, given their prior attainment in GCSE examinations.
146. Year 13 students are already building well on their very good AS-level results. Current standards are well above those typical for the A-level course and boys and girls alike from all social and ethnic backgrounds are achieving very well. They analyse poems from Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* confidently, and consider different interpretations to make a personal response to the way the poet uses language, structure and imagery for effect. Students plan and structure essays coherently and are developing well their capacity to refer to the historical and social contexts of set texts.
147. Year 12 students are at a very early stage of their AS-level course. Many are already confident speakers, but their experience of literature is very limited and few have read widely prior to the course. At present their responses to texts are descriptive rather than evaluative.
148. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have high expectations of students. Their very good knowledge of set texts enables them to ask students challenging questions during class discussions and provide them with clear guidance to improve their essays. Teachers make frequent reference to assessment objectives so that students know exactly what they need to achieve. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of methods and enable students to develop a personal response to literature in pairs and small groups. These lessons move along at a lively pace. In contrast, teachers sometimes dominate class discussion for far too long and prevent less confident students from contributing their views. Despite this inconsistency in teaching, students have very positive attitudes. They work very hard and productively in all lessons and are very keen to take responsibility for their own learning. As a result, they learn and achieve very well.
149. Students enjoy studying English Literature and are pleased with their choice of course. However, the department provides few opportunities for students to extend their study through extra-curricular activities such as theatre visits.
150. Leadership of the subject in the sixth form is satisfactory and ensures that teachers are aware of their responsibilities. However, the monitoring of teaching in the department is too informal and priorities for development have not been identified. Courses are well managed and the head of department ensures that students' achievement is monitored closely. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards are improving and the number of students studying English has increased in recent years.

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

151. Students' standards of language and literacy are good and enable them to make good progress in the subjects of their choice in the sixth form. Their written work is of a good standard and many well organised folders show good note-taking skills. Students speak confidently in class discussions and listen very carefully to each other's contributions. The school encourages students to complete a portfolio of evidence towards the Key Skills award in communication skills at level three. Teachers in all subjects identify a good range of opportunities for students to use and develop these skills.



## Modern foreign languages

The focus was on French, but Spanish was also sampled. In the Year 12 Spanish lesson seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory. In the Year 13 lesson, they were good. Students attain well above average standards in the subject in Year 13, and achieve well.

### French

Provision in French is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching enables students to achieve very well.
- There is very good enrichment of the curriculum.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

#### Commentary

152. A-level results were well above average in 2002 and 2003 and remained close to that standard in 2004.
153. The 16 students currently in Year 12 began their courses with above average standards from GCSE examinations, and their speaking skills are good. During their AS-level courses, Year 12 students use the many opportunities for extended writing to develop a high standard in written skills. They take great pride in their work and achieve very well. Work experience in France at the end of the year improves students' linguistic skills and makes a valuable contribution to their personal development.
154. Standards in Year 13 are well above average. Students express their ideas fluently and confidently in spoken and written French. They are committed to the subject and achieve very well. They read widely, watch French-language films regularly, use the Internet effectively for research and study, and keep up personal contacts in France.
155. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are expert linguists, who use the language extensively to develop students' listening and speaking skills. The teachers' enthusiasm is infectious. They work well as a team, know their students well and give them good advice and help. They employ a wide range of good materials very effectively to extend students' knowledge and reading skills. Their innovative and challenging teaching methods ensure that work is well focused and bring out the best in students. Where necessary they provide very effective study- support material to help the less fluent students develop their powers of expression and make the transition from GCSE work to advanced study.
156. The course is very well led and managed. However, the main accommodation is cramped, airless and poorly soundproofed, and restricts the range of activities possible.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are excellent and give students a very good quality of education.
- Teaching is very good and provides a well structured development of new topics and ideas in a challenging environment for learning.
- Students' independent skills for learning are well developed.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and restricts the range of learning activities.

## Commentary

157. More Year 13 students have taken Alevel examinations since 2002, when results were well above average. In 2003, results were above average, because of the broadening profile of ability of the students taking the course. In 2004, results were at a similar level. Four students were not entered for the examination at the end of the course, but their grades are currently included in the statistics affecting overall grading. For those completing the course, results represented good achievement, given their GCSE examination results. All A-level further mathematics candidates were successful. Three-quarters of Year 12 students who were entered for the AS-level examination gained grades sufficient to provide a firm base for further study.
158. Standards seen during the inspection of students from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds were in line with those expected for A-level mathematics courses. The proportion of boys and girls changes each year, but there is, currently, a predominance of boys on courses. The range of mathematical competence of Year 12 students is wide. Some who took GCSE intermediate courses find difficulty in mastering the algebraic requirements of AS-level in their early lessons. However, students cover their programmes of study well and, by Year 13, they are confident and take increasing responsibility for their own learning and progress. Students' work is mathematically rigorous, and shows good understanding of mathematical method. Students are successful in producing their own notes. These are of high quality and support very well revision and the learning of the lower attaining students. Overall, students achieve well in lessons, supported by very mature relationships within classes, in which there is open dialogue on ways to improve. Students following the further mathematics course make rapid progress and are entered for their first A-level examinations in Year 12.
159. The teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' impressive subject knowledge and experience provide lessons which are insightful and well structured. These enable students to learn very successfully and provide solid foundations for further progress. Teachers know their students well and make learning challenging in lessons that run at a brisk pace. The least effective lessons are less challenging and time is used far less well. Teachers care greatly about the success of their students and give freely of their time to provide support for groups and individuals - including e-mail support for homework.
160. Leadership and management are excellent. The curriculum co-ordinator has provided the most appropriate courses to meet students' needs. The head of department has developed a very skilled team of teachers, who give students a wide range of learning opportunities. There is a very effective assessment system, by which students are monitored and kept informed of their progress towards their target grades. However, accommodation for lessons is unsatisfactory. Small classrooms are subject to noise from neighbouring rooms. They are cramped for the numbers of students involved and this restricts teachers' choice of methods and styles. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

161. Students' mathematical skills are above average and contribute well to their studies in other subjects. However, the sequencing of topics in mathematics is out of phase with those in physics. The science department, itself, teaches the mathematical techniques required for their courses. Very good use and development of data analysis take place in history lessons. However, there is evidence of confusion in use of percentages during business studies lessons. There is no development of students' mathematical skills in the Key Skills course. Students are able to re-take the GCSE examination in mathematics in the sixth form, if necessary, but, currently, no lesson time is provided. The teaching of mathematical skills across the curriculum is good in mathematics, science subjects, and in geography and history. In other subjects, the teaching is satisfactory.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus was on physics, but biology and chemistry were sampled. In biology, one Year 12 lesson was observed. Students are just beginning the AS level course. They achieved well because of their very positive attitudes and the teachers' good planning of the lesson. As a result, students developed a good understanding of the composition of biological modules. One Year 13 chemistry lesson was seen, in which standards were good and students achieved well. Teaching and learning were good and the teacher made good use of the interactive whiteboard to explain complex chemical reactions.

## Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good and resources are used effectively.
- Students achieve well, are very positive about the course and work well independently and collaboratively.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and the planning of lessons is very good.

### Commentary

162. There has been a recent increase in the number of students studying physics. Most students attain well enough in AS-level examinations to continue their studies to A-level with confidence. A-level results in 2002 and in 2003 were well above average, although few took the A-level examination in 2003; all passed and well over half the grades gained were A or B. Many more students took the examination in 2004, when the large majority passed and more than half again gained A or B grades. Students attain equally well irrespective of differences in their backgrounds.
163. The standards of work seen during the inspection were above the expectations for the course, and students achieved well. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have well developed practical and organisational skills. In Year 12, students responded very well to a stimulating presentation and introduction to dynamics and were able to add and resolve vectors with accuracy. Similarly, students in Year 13 showed good understanding of the concept of mass defect and were able to talk with confidence about binding energy. Guided and monitored by staff, most students produce well organised folders that contain detailed and useful notes.
164. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There is a wide range of teaching strategies. Lessons are challenging and teachers' expectations of students are demanding, but realistic. Lesson planning and practical work in laboratories are very well organised. New ICT resources are used effectively. The frequent use of focused discussion helps students to learn very well. Teachers' enthusiasm is reflected in the positive attitude and high quality of work of students in both year groups who work very well, both individually and collaboratively. Staff are very good role models. Teachers' enthusiasm is reflected in the very positive attitudes and work of students in both year groups. Staff encourage very high standards of commitment and behaviour and students respond very well.
165. Leadership and management of physics are very good. The previous head of physics has very recently been promoted within the school. The quality of technical support across the department is outstanding. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. There has been significant improvement in the way physics is organised and taught. ICT resources for ICT have greatly improved. Schemes of work have been updated and support learning well, including many opportunities for revision.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching and assessment.
- Students value the personal care and guidance that they receive and the practical investigations that they do.

## Commentary

166. The attainment of students on entry to the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) single award course has been below average in recent years. The course is becoming more popular and now students from other schools are now joining the course. The attainment of the new Year 12 cohort who are now just starting the course is a little above average. Four of the five Year 13 candidates passed the six-unit AVCE examination. Six of the 11 Year 12 candidates passed the Year 12 AVCE examination.
167. However, teachers have gained experience from the last two years and, consequently, students' work seen in the inspection was of a higher standard than recent examination results. Most students make good progress from their low baseline, and they achieve well overall. In work seen in Year 12, students achieved well and reached expected standards for the course, for example, when constructing organisational structures. Most were able to work individually on the task, with good support from the teacher. In Year 13, standards seen were below those typical for the course, but students achieved well when working on the advantages and disadvantages of networks, because teaching was good. Students achieve equally well, irrespective of their different backgrounds.
168. Teaching and learning are good in both years. Lively interactive presentations by teachers bring topics alive and there is a purposeful atmosphere. Students are encouraged to develop skills of independent research and to present their findings in class discussions. Teachers capitalise well on the practical emphasis of the course, and students respond accordingly. However, set tasks are not always well suited to the varied aptitudes and experience of the students. Students speak very highly of the personal help and guidance that their teachers provide, and they apply themselves energetically to their studies. Although there has been some discontinuity in staffing, additional after-school lessons are freely provided on a regular basis for both Year 12 and Year 13 students. Assessment is used well to enhance students' learning. Students keep good notes which are monitored regularly and assignments are marked diligently, with clear indications of how to improve. Students have a clear idea of how well they are doing and set themselves challenging targets.
169. Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation is strong and although schemes of work are not yet detailed enough to support teachers' planning effectively, they are already being rewritten to build on early experience. At the time of the last inspection, there were no opportunities for students to pursue an advanced ICT qualification in the sixth form; now this opportunity is available, so improvement has been good.

## Information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum

170. As a result of recent improvements in provision in Years 10 and 11, the ICT skills of those continuing into the sixth form now match those of students joining from other schools. Although ICT is not taught to all as a key skill in the sixth form, students have good opportunities to practise and extend their skills in other subjects. They use these skills in most subjects for word processing, preparing presentations and for research through the Internet. They use spreadsheets skilfully to produce charts in science and geography as well as in image-processing software in art. Many teachers are also able to correspond with students by e-mail, for example to support homework assignments. ICT resources have improved markedly in recent years, so that students have ready access to computers to assist their studies.

## HUMANITIES

171. The focus was on history, but Christian theology, geography, government and politics, sociology and psychology were sampled. In **Christian theology**, a Year 13 lesson was observed. Students achieved very well because of the teacher's high expectations and challenging questions. As a result, they developed a very good awareness of the difference

between inductive and deductive evidence. In **geography**, two very well taught lessons were seen. Year 13 students are achieving very good standards. The teaching made very good use of ICT and other visual aids to help students understand the process of soil moisture recharge. Students were keen to take responsibility for their own learning by building up their own case studies. In **government and politics**, a Year 12 lesson, taught through video conferencing, was observed. The quality of the visual image was poor and the sound quality was barely satisfactory, but students had excellent attitudes, listened intently and participated well. As a result, they developed a better understanding of issues related to power and politics. In **sociology**, two lessons were seen in which students learned successfully from their teacher's very good subject knowledge. They made very good progress in understanding sociological theories which linked religion and the needs of society. In **psychology**, two very well taught lessons were seen in which Year 13 students achieved well when exploring issues concerning the relationship of the media to anti-social behaviour. A lesson for a very large Year 12 class on abnormality was very well taught. All students from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds and with special needs provided through the school's Integrated Resource Unit, achieved equally well.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent A-level results in history are well above average, with most students showing very good achievement in relation to their attainment on entry to the course.
- Students enjoy history and appreciate the academic rigour generated by the very good teaching.
- The leadership of the subject is very good.

### Commentary

172. Students' performance in the A-level examination in 2002 was well above average. In 2003, girls and boys of differing competence from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds attained above average standards, and many students got their best result in this subject. AS-level results in 2004 were well above typical standards, when 11 of the 16 candidates gained an A or B grade, including the few who had not studied history during Years 10 and 11 to the GCSE examination. However, fewer students than previously reached the A or B standard at A-level in 2004. All students commencing the course completed it and showed very good achievement in terms of their attainment on entry to the course.
173. In work seen during the inspection, standards were above average and achievement was very good. Attainment is above what might be expected at this early stage of the Year 12 course, although a few students have not studied history beyond Year 9. In Year 13, students confidently demonstrate very good levels of knowledge and understanding to appreciate how Gladstone's personality affected the Irish problem and of his resolve to pacify Ireland. Students analyse sources of evidence critically and with maturity. From a wide range of independent research, including the Internet, students very effectively structure convincing arguments, pose interesting questions or offer well balanced oral and written answers.
174. Teaching and learning were very good in each of the four lessons seen. The teachers' high expectations, confident subject expertise and academic rigour are reflected in the quality of their lively Power-Point presentations. Probing questions then draw very effectively on the students' new learning. Students are encouraged to extend their repertoire of study skills and they make concise and accurate notes to support their essays. Students realise that they are taught well and respond accordingly. The rapport between students and teachers is very good.

175. This popular subject is very well led and managed. The subject leader has a very clear vision of how to raise and maintain standards. Teaching is monitored and good practice is shared. Students are very well supported and teachers are readily available to help in school and offer e-mail communication. Schemes of work are very clear and resources are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

176. Design and technology, electronics, food studies and textiles were sampled. In **design and technology**, two lessons were observed. Standards were typical of those found nationally in Years 12 and 13 and students' achievement was satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They plan well structured tasks and lead class discussions very well. Two lessons were observed in **electronics**. Year 12 and Year 13 students were achieving well. They benefited from the teacher's very good knowledge of the subject and very challenging teaching that built well on students' prior knowledge. In **food studies** and **textiles**, students had just begun to study the AS level course.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

### **Art**

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is consistently good and leads to students learning well.
- The improvement of sixth form provision has not been identified as a focus in planning.
- The lack of a dedicated workspace for students hinders improvement.
- There is a great deal of subject expertise shared among the teaching staff.

### **Commentary**

177. Few students usually study art. In 2003, all of the small entry for A-level passed the examination, but few gained grades A or B. Low numbers make national comparisons unreliable. In 2002, A-level results were average. Students' attainment in the AS-level examination in relation to their previous GCSE examination results indicates satisfactory achievement. This is confirmed in work seen during inspection. Students who complete the AS-level examination in Year 12 are equipped to continue to A-level with confidence. No differences are apparent in the work of students from different social, ethnic or religious backgrounds.
178. The standards of work seen in Years 12 and 13 represent the full range of attainment for advanced courses. More competent girls produce extensive bodies of work developed from broad themes. They use a good range of media and have very well developed technical skills. Students bring their own interests, concerns and beliefs to their work in examining issues - for example, from the idea of 'self'. A less competent boy was seen to draw well, but work did not always lead to an overall, completed and coherent study.
179. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good and there is some very good teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Students are interested and motivated because teachers are able to transmit their enthusiasm for the subject to them. They acquire new skills through sharply focused teaching and effective use of time. However, in some teacher-led sessions, students are not active enough, because insufficient demands are made on them.
180. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Despite the successes in GCSE examinations in the main school, recruitment to sixth form courses is erratic and numbers of

students remain low. Provision in the sixth form has not been identified as a focus for improvement. The lack of a designated workspace for students limits the opportunities for private study with access to materials and equipment. It diminishes students' presence and their potential for inspiring younger pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **Physical education and sport**

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

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

- Students achieve very well because of students' very positive attitudes and good teaching.
- Very good leadership and management have resulted in a commitment to improving standards.
- Some lessons are too teacher-led and students are not involved enough.
- Learning objectives and summaries in lessons are not consistently well conveyed to students.
- Coursework is very good.

#### **Commentary**

181. A-level results have risen steadily in recent years. They were above average in 2003 and average in 2002. Latest results indicate that standards are continuing to rise. This constitutes very good progress for all students, whatever their religious, social or ethnic backgrounds. Year 12 AS-level results have been less strong, with no high grades in 2003, but there was an improvement in 2004. Students successfully completing the Year 12 AS-level course are able to continue to A-level with confidence.
182. Standards of work seen are currently above average in Year 13. Written work is detailed and students have very good knowledge of physiology. They are able to apply their knowledge in their personal exercise programme of coursework. Coursework sets out clear aims and hypotheses, and shows a very good level in analysing skills. Argument is fluent, comparisons are drawn, and findings are usually supported by a good range of examples. Low attainers find difficulties in applying knowledge from one area of study to another, and fail to explain their answers consistently, or with sufficient detail.
183. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make good use of computers to guide students' learning. Questioning reveals very secure subject knowledge, and is particularly challenging to aid students' learning. Students benefit from the guidance that teachers give in use of study skills. Very good relationships in lessons enable students to feel secure, committed to the course and keen to do well. Occasionally lessons become too teacher-led, and learning objectives and plenary sessions are inconsistently delivered. Marking is regularly carried out and encouraging. There is an inconsistent approach to the setting of learning targets for students.
184. Leadership and management are very good, with a clear commitment to improving standards. Analysis of performance takes place and informs future planning. New ideas are considered, and a broad curriculum serves the students very well. Students speak highly of their teachers and appreciate the use of learning mentors and the self-assessment opportunities provided for them. Standards and educational provision were very good in 1998 and have been maintained at this level.



## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

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

- Students' achievement is improving because of their very positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge is helpful to students' learning.
- ICT is used effectively by teachers and students.
- Resources are not readily accessible to students because the subject lacks a permanent classroom base.
- Marking does not provide enough guidance for improvement and examples of good practice are not used effectively enough.
- Strategies for raising attainment further are not detailed enough.

#### **Commentary**

185. A-level examination results in 2002 were average, and below this in 2003. Very few girls followed the course in 2003, but they attained well. In 2004, all nine candidates passed the examination, and four attained grade B. All 15 candidates passed the 2004 Year 12 AS-level examination, and four gained grades A or B. Students are suitably equipped by the Year 12 course to continue to A-level. Students' performance is unrelated to their ethnic or religious backgrounds.
186. Year 13 students were seen to achieve satisfactorily and reach typical standards for their courses during the inspection. They worked effectively in small groups to apply knowledge in new contexts. They used business terminology well and developed an understanding of the factors influencing the location of industries. Their very positive attitudes help to enhance their achievement. Year 12 students also achieved satisfactorily. They were seen to use the Internet well for research into theories of motivation.
187. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their specialist areas, and this is used well to introduce business concepts. Lessons are very well planned, and teachers use electronic resources effectively to engage students and maintain good pace. Marking celebrates achievement, but lacks supporting guidance. Students do not use examples of good practice enough to improve their understanding and to rework assignments. Students value target setting as an incentive to learning.
188. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed subject leader has started well, and there is a good rapport among staff and students. The department tracks and monitors progress well through reviews with students of their work. The analysis of data on students' performance is very good, but planning is not yet tightly focused on measurable objectives and outcomes to raise attainment further. The lack of a permanent room for the subject impacts negatively on achievement, because students lack ready access to a resource base to support their independent learning.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

189. In Year 12, students follow a course in liberal studies which leads to a **general studies** examination course in Year 13. It was not possible to observe these subjects during the week of the inspection. In 2003, a large number of students took the examination and nearly all passed. Results were in line with the national average.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

|                                   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| The leadership of the headteacher |   | 2 |
| 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).*