

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ALLERTON GRANGE SCHOOL**

Leeds

LEA area: Leeds

Unique reference number: 108058

Headteacher: Mrs Jean Hertrich

Lead inspector: Mr Peter Hill

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> October 2004

Inspection number: 268733

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Community  
Age range of students: 11 – 18  
Gender of students: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1789

School address: Talbot Avenue  
Leeds  
West Yorkshire  
Postcode: LS17 6SF

Telephone number: 0113 3684200  
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Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr Richard Morris

Date of previous inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> May 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Allerton Grange School is a larger than average comprehensive school situated in the Moortown area of Leeds. There are 1789 students aged 11 to 18 on roll. Students come from a large number of feeder primary schools and a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Many students live in the immediate vicinity of the school but a majority travel to school from inner city areas. The school admits a fully comprehensive intake. Students come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds, although a considerable number of students experience disadvantaged backgrounds in both economic and social terms. The school is distinctly multicultural, with the majority of students coming from the Asian or black Caribbean community.

Twenty-two per cent of the students are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average. There are 415 students on the special educational needs register and 59 have a Statement of Special Educational Need. These figures are proportionately higher than the national averages. A designated unit of deaf and hearing impaired students provides support for 17 statemented students who are integrated into mainstream classes where appropriate. Ten students speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to the school is below average.

The school is involved in the Excellence in Cities initiative and was awarded Beacon School status in 2000 and the Artsmark silver award in 2004. It is part of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Project.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
6642	Peter Hill	Lead inspector	
13448	Dawn Lloyd	Lay inspector	
13154	David Morton	Team inspector	English
4926	Thelma Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics
3937	John Seed	Team inspector	Science
15940	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Art, vocational education
2491	Douglas Beaumont	Team inspector	Design and technology
30215	Helen Feasey	Team inspector	Geography
30216	Adrian Elliott	Team inspector	History
4689	Monica Christian	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31649	Richard Marsden	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
11676	Geoffrey Thomas	Team inspector	Music
4676	Mary Griffiths	Team inspector	Physical education, special educational needs
4664	Ian Birnie	Team inspector	Religious education
20189	Jagat Nagra	Team inspector	Community languages, English as an additional language
12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	Psychology, sociology

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS</b>	<b>11</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>15</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>23</b>
Work-related learning	
Deaf and hearing impaired unit	
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>57</b>



## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good, effective school** providing an exceptionally inclusive and supportive environment for its students. **Very good** leadership, together with the significant improvements in teaching and learning, have improved standards overall. Standards of work seen are now in line with the national average overall. The school provides **good value for money**.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management are good overall with some outstanding strengths. The leadership by the headteacher is very good.
- This is an exceptionally inclusive school.
- The school has established a very good climate for learning which is having a positive effect on raising attainment.
- The quality of teaching is good, with a high percentage of very good teaching, resulting in good learning.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Financial management and the use of available resources to improve standards are very good.
- Accommodation has some significant shortcomings which are not conducive to learning.
- Although there is good provision for information and communication technology (ICT) as a subject, the use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Systems for supporting students with special educational needs are very good.
- The school is developing a very good assessment management system. However, this is not yet fully implemented by all departments.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Students' achievement is **good** throughout the school and the overall standards attained are **average**. However, standards were below average in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in the overall standards attained in the 2003 GCSE examinations. The majority of students have levels of attainment which are below average when they enter the school in Year 7 and attain standards which are average by the end of Year 11. This represents good progress. Standards by the end of the sixth form are above average overall. Provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. The introduction of citizenship into the school has been very well planned and, as a result, provision is good. Students have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the school. Overall attendance figures are average.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION



**The school provides a good education. Teaching is good throughout the school** with a significant amount of very good and some excellent teaching. Only a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen. This is an improvement since the last inspection. As a result of good teaching, supported by very good relationships and classroom and behaviour management, **learning is good** with students making **good progress**. The systems for, and quality of, assessment are good and an area which the school is developing well. Information from the inspection confirms that there is variation in the way that assessment information is used across the school for raising standards. The curriculum is **good** overall and is enriched through a good range of additional experiences and activities. Despite the school's efforts, accommodation overall is **unsatisfactory**. The use of ICT across the curriculum is **unsatisfactory** and needs development. The care, support and guidance of students are **good**, and significant and very positive factors in teaching. Partnership with parents is **good** and improving. Links with the community and other local schools are **good**.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership of the school by the headteacher is **very good**. Her vision and energy, along with the strong and very good support provided by key staff, have been instrumental in bringing about some decisive changes to the school over the past year. The school is **well** managed although there remain a few areas where subject management is unsatisfactory. Governors are **effective** and contribute notably to the school's leadership.

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

The school's links with parents are **good**. Overall, parents are supportive of the school and are satisfied with its work and are pleased with the recently improved performance and profile of the school. They have no significant overall concerns. Students like coming to school and enjoy lessons. The school council is an exceptionally effective and developing forum for students to make their views known. Students value it.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve accommodation to support teaching and learning and raise standards.
- Standardise the use of assessment information, based on the very good recent initiatives that the school has developed.
- Improve the school-wide implementation of cross-curricular ICT.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Build on the good systems for collective worship to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

## **THE SIXTH FORM AT ALLERTON GRANGE SCHOOL**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

**The sixth form is very good and improving.** Standards are above average in a number of subjects and improving. Students are able to select their courses from a wide range on offer.

Teaching is very good, enabling students to learn successfully and achieve well. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and the sixth form is cost effective.

**The main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- Teachers enable students to take significant responsibility for their own learning.
- Leadership and management are very good in providing clear vision, a sense of purpose and high aspirations.
- Teaching is very good and, as a result, the majority of students achieve considerable success.
- Professional relationships between the teachers and students are very good and often excellent.
- Support, advice and guidance for all students are very good.
- Curricular opportunities are designed around students' needs and are therefore very good.
- Links with other schools and colleges are underdeveloped.
- Accommodation is poor and is having a detrimental impact on the future development of the sixth form.

**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	<b>Good in English language.</b> A-level results in 2003 were average, and in 2004 the results of higher attaining students were better than this. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Students' very good attitudes help them to achieve well. <b>Satisfactory in modern foreign languages.</b> Numbers choosing languages are very low but examination results are good.
Mathematics	<b>Unsatisfactory in mathematics.</b> A-level examination results in 2003 were well below the national average. Despite some very good teaching, achievement is unsatisfactory because mathematical expertise was not apparent in some of the teaching.
Science	<b>Good in biology.</b> Students achieve well and attain above average standards. Teaching is consistently good. Students are kept well informed about their progress. <b>Good in chemistry.</b> Standards are above average. Students achieve well and make good progress as a result of their very positive attitudes and good teaching. Leadership and management are good.
Humanities	<b>Very good in geography.</b> Students achieve very well because leadership, management and teaching are very good. Fieldwork makes a significant contribution to students' learning. <b>Very good in psychology.</b> Standards are above average and achievement is average or above average. Progress is very good. Teaching and learning are very good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Very good in textiles.</b> Very good teaching and excellent leadership combine to enable students to achieve their potential and reach national standards.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Very good in art.</b> Standards are rising because of very good teaching and the very good attitudes of the students. Achievement is very good. <b>Good in theatre studies.</b> Teaching and learning are good and sometimes

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

### **The provision of support advice and guidance for sixth form students is very good.**

The head of sixth form and teachers promote a very successful inclusive system of support for all students. Care and support for every individual student form a core belief and ensure a very good learning partnership. Students are fully involved in school life. Many take responsibility as mentors, providing support for students in Years 7 to 9. Students are requested to take part in reviews providing information to the management team to help inform teaching and to keep teachers informed of students' views. Academic reviews are continuous and provide students with a valuable insight into their progress. All students are very well supported and given access to information about career development and employment opportunities. A number of students re-sit examinations in order to improve grades. Other students continue beyond the two years of a sixth form education because they have moved through intermediate level studies on to advanced level. The school supports these students until such time that final graduation is achieved.

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

### **Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.**

The head of the sixth form is very well supported by senior management. They share a common belief in the importance of support for all individuals. There is a clear vision and sense of purpose. The general management of the sixth form is impressive and well organised, involving high aspirations and the promotion of equality for all. The curriculum is balanced and designed to provide opportunities for all students. The curriculum is expanding year on year because of the growth in the numbers of students and the continued development of further opportunities for students. Student reviews are used effectively to measure the performance of both students and their teachers. Consequently, teaching overall is very good and achievement is good, often very good. Community and college links are satisfactory but students would benefit if the existing links were enhanced as a means for the further expansion of the curriculum. Planning is in place to expand enhancement opportunities for students

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

Students enjoy being a part of the sixth form and comment that courses suit their abilities, interests and career aspirations. Induction into the sixth form was considered to be very useful and informative. None of the students interviewed considered that they had made an error in their choice of subjects. All were particularly satisfied. They considered their tutors, teachers and the head of sixth form to be extremely supportive and totally trustworthy. They considered that they would have no problem in finding a sympathetic adult should they have problems in or out of school. They were encouraged by the fact that they were involved in a partnership with their teachers through the review process. All were aware of their target grades and the expectations their teachers had of them. Several students were involved in the mentoring scheme, assisting in lessons with students in the lower school.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students' achievement is **good** throughout the school and the overall standards attained are **average**. However, standards were below average in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in the overall standards attained in the 2003 GCSE examinations. The majority of students have levels of attainment which are below average when they enter the school in Year 7 and attain standards which are average by the end of Year 11. This represents good progress. Standards by the end of the sixth form are above average overall.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress and achieve well in most subjects.
- Standards in modern foreign languages are below average, as are standards in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards in the sixth form are above average in a significant number of subjects with the exception of mathematics.
- Inspection evidence shows that there is an upward trend in standards.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum are unsatisfactory.
- Standards in design and technology vary significantly between subject areas.

#### Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9 students' overall attainment as measured in National Curriculum tests for 2003 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is below average. The picture is the same when compared with the results in similar schools on the basis of prior attainment. However, evidence from the inspection shows that in the core subjects at the end of Year 9, students' attainment is in line with national averages. There is a clear indication of improvement in attainment in Years 7 to 9 and the provisional results in national tests for 2004 show a significant improvement. Standards in modern foreign languages, design and technology, ICT, history and geography are below average, but, with the exception of modern foreign languages, students achieve well in all these subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.6 (34.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	33.0 (32.3)	35.4 (34.7)
science	32.1 (30.5)	33.6 ( 33.3 )

*There were 304 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. At the end of Year 11, when compared with results in all schools nationally, students' attainment at GCSE/GNVQ in 2003 was below the national average for students gaining five or more passes at grades A\*-C and five or more passes at grades A\*-G. As in Key

Stage 3, inspection evidence clearly indicated an improvement in attainment with standards being average in English and science and below average in mathematics. Standards are below average in modern foreign languages although in the community languages of Panjabi and Urdu they are above average. Standards in design and technology vary between the different elements of the subject. They are high in textiles and graphics, improving in food technology, but are well below average in systems and resistant materials. Girls significantly outperform boys in design and technology.

3. In most subjects by the end of Year 11, with the exception of modern foreign languages, where achievement is below average, students are achieving at least satisfactorily. Students achieve very well in English and well in science, art, geography, citizenship, community languages and music.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	43.0 (40.0)	52.0 (50.0)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	82.0 (74.0)	91.0 (91.0)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	92.0 (85.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per students (best eight subjects)	31.5 (28.5)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 290 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. Students with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets. The progress of students with hearing impairment is often very good. This is due to good teaching combined with high quality support and effective strategies for raising attainment. Students are encouraged to realise their full potential within an enriching and inclusive environment. Although most students are supported within mainstream classes, the learning support department provides for small groups and individuals to further develop literacy, numeracy, language and social skills. Good achievement is the product of students working hard and behaving well.
5. The trend in results at both key stages is now one of improvement. Inspection evidence clearly indicates that standards are improving, that appropriate targets are being set and that students are making good progress overall as they move through the school. The key skills of numeracy are developing satisfactorily and, although literacy across the curriculum is developing well in many subjects, this remains a key area for development in order to raise standards. Standards in the use of ICT across the curriculum are below average and provision in this area remains unsatisfactory, despite the recent improvements in provision for ICT as a subject.
6. Raising standards is one of the major aspects of the school's work. Management, very well supported now by all staff, is determined to drive up standards. Restructuring and the recent stability of staffing, supported by a very vigorous and supportive senior management team, have improved teaching in almost all areas of the school. This is clearly having a direct and very significant effect on learning and thereby on standards.

#### **Sixth form**

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	95.0 (94.5)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	33.3 (40.3)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	266.5 (279.8)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 110 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

7. Sixth form students are achieving well. In several subjects standards are higher than the national average in the higher grades of GCE and AVCE examinations. The overall pass rate in the majority of examinations was above the national average.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Improving standards have been maintained during a time of significant increase in the numbers of students entering this open access sixth form.
- The achievement of students in the majority of GCE Alevel subjects has been, and continues to be, good.
- Achievement in AVCE examinations in business studies and health and social care is good when consideration is given to the prior attainment in GCSE examinations of the students concerned.

### **Commentary**

8. Careful attention has been made to ensure that academic standards continue to improve during a period of sustained growth in the numbers of students enrolling into this open access sixth form. Teachers have modified their teaching styles to ensure that students are more actively involved in their learning. Students respond well and a considerable number are confident learners, capable of demonstrating independence and a desire to succeed. Students make very good progress in the sixth form and the amount of work some produce is impressive. Standards of work seen during the inspection demonstrate that very good levels of achievement have been reached in sociology, psychology and art. Good achievement is evident in English, biology, vocational subjects, ICT, music and textiles.

### **Student's attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students have **good** attitudes to learning and their behaviour, in lessons and around the school, is predominantly **good**. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students involve themselves enthusiastically in all aspects of school life.
- Very good relationships throughout the school result in a positive ethos and effective learning.
- Sometimes a small number of students lack interest, do not listen and can disrupt others by their behaviour.

### **Commentary**

9. Students are proud of their school and quick to take advantage of all the opportunities it offers them. There is no shortage of participants in the wide range of extra-curricular activities available and students crowd into the library for the after-school homework club. They are conscious that they can play a significant part in making the school a place where everyone feels valued. The highly successful school council provides a valuable link between students and senior staff and governors. It enables students to have their say in matters that affect them directly. They feel that their views are genuinely appreciated and can point to many examples of changes that have been made as a result of their suggestions. Their involvement in staff appointments, at all levels, places on them a heavy responsibility, which they fulfil conscientiously, while gaining an insight into the complexities of school management.
10. The peer mentoring scheme attracts high numbers of student volunteers, who provide a confidential listening ear for those with problems, or give additional support in classrooms, particularly for students with special needs. All students in Year 10 undertake a community service placement as part of their citizenship course. They are enthusiastic about the value of this experience in adding to their knowledge and understanding of themselves and others. Students on the XL course, which concentrates on improving life skills, enjoy organising a very popular annual party for elderly people in the locality, while the necessary funds are raised across the school. Through their willing participation in all kinds of activities students develop maturity and confidence. At the same time their self-esteem is enhanced by the knowledge that they have helped others and made a positive contribution to the school community.
11. Students relate very well to one another and to staff. The degree of racial harmony is particularly striking in this large, multi-ethnic school. Students themselves comment on their satisfaction with the way different cultures mix together, citing it as one of the main strengths of the school. Because relationships overall are so good, students participate willingly in lessons. They work well together in pairs or groups, co-operating and supporting one another appropriately. The mutual respect between students and staff that exists in many classrooms leads to positive attitudes and effective learning. Students try hard and are keen to do well.
12. Although behaviour is usually good, sometimes students find it hard to sustain concentration so that they become restless and inattentive, lack motivation and cause minor disruption to the lesson. The school has invested in behaviour management training for staff and has instituted effective systems to deal with instances of poor behaviour. In certain cases, strategies may include the possibility of an alternative curriculum or specific individual support for students at risk of exclusion. As a result, the number of exclusions has fallen dramatically in the last year and continues to do so.
13. The provision for the promotion of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is **good** overall and a strength of the school. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in identifying areas within subjects where this important aspect can be further developed. Good examples of subjects identifying the contribution they can make to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development were observed in art, English, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education and science. The school recognises that there is still some way to go in furthering students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all subjects and there are occasions where there are missed opportunities.



14. The school is, without question, energetic in striving to secure the well-being of all students. A firm ethical position is taken on the quality of personal relationships and general behaviour. The scheme of personal, social and careers education (PSCE) makes an important contribution to the moral and social development of students. The well-conceived and delivered citizenship course plays a formative role in consolidating students' understanding of their responsibilities in living in a community.
15. School assembly provides an important opportunity for the community to gather and celebrate those values identified and named as central to positive human development. Although the statutory requirement for collective worship is not yet fully met, the school has worked hard at improvement. Two full assemblies are held weekly for each year and, on occasion, inter-year assemblies take place. On other days, students meet in tutorial groups. The assembly calendar is planned in advance, with topics and leadership being clearly identified.

**Attendance**

16. Students' attendance is similar to that found in secondary schools nationally. There are effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance, as well as a rigorous system of encouraging punctuality for students in Years 7 to 9, which has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of late arrivals at school. The punctuality of the students between lessons, partly because of the layout of the site, is not always as good as it should be.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	7.0
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.8
National data	1.1

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

**Ethnic background of students**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani

No of students on roll
673
1
15
52
9
6
10
267
426

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
70	0
0	0
0	0
39	1
0	0
0	0
4	0
5	0
37	3

Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	16	1	1
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	45	3	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	131	43	1
Black or Black British – African	37	7	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	24	13	0
Chinese	29	0	0
Any other ethnic group	28	4	0
No ethnic group recorded	20	9	1

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good**. The assessment of students' work is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' energy and enthusiasm capture students' interest.
- Good teaching, usually by specialists, makes appropriate demands upon students whilst skilfully meeting the needs of those with special educational needs.
- Teachers ensure that all students are included in all activities available to them.
- Teachers' planning is consistently thorough and seeks to match teaching to students' learning needs.
- Students are usually fully engaged with their work, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- In the best lessons teachers assess students' progress in lessons and take steps to ensure students do as well as they should.
- Departments have taken note of government initiatives related to teaching and learning but do not always apply the principles to their planning and classroom practice.

## Commentary

17. The quality of education is secured by good teaching and learning. Parents and students consider teaching to be good, and this is the judgement, too, of inspectors. Most teachers work hard to ensure that students make progress and achieve well. The proportion of good or better teaching is higher than that found nationally. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11, with a marginally larger proportion of teaching that is good or better in Years 10 and 11.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 150 lessons in Years 7 to 11*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
8 (5.3%)	48 (32.0%)	46 (30.7%)	38 (25.3%)	7 (4.7%)	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. Teaching in 3 lessons was not evaluated.*

18. Teachers know their subjects well and teach them with energy, enthusiasm and expertise. These characteristics are used to challenge students and get them to work hard with a sense of purpose. This leads to consistently good achievement. The good teaching is reinforced by the effective use of assessment during lessons to ensure that all students are doing as well as they can in the lesson. In the best lessons it is significant the way teachers intervene in the central part of the lesson to extend learning, to challenge, and to support those finding work difficult and ensure that all are working on worthwhile tasks. Students are challenged to do better than their previous best. The best lessons have lively starts that capture the interests of students. Learning objectives are clearly stated, displayed and discussed and at the end of good lessons students indicate whether the objectives have been achieved. When this works well, it has been carefully planned, taking into account the different learning needs of students or groups in the class.
19. Students learn well. In English for example, consistently good teaching challenges them to think how they use language. Not all subjects see the value of this emphasis and not all have assimilated the principles of the national initiatives designed to improve teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 or have extended these principles into Years 10 and 11. Students' reading and writing clearly show where the principles have been applied well.
20. The best teaching is further characterised by the use of variety in presentation and development during the lesson. The needs of individuals are considered at the planning stage. Most of all students know what they are aiming to learn and that they will be tested on this learning at the end of the lesson. Good lessons move along at a cracking pace with high expectations, and students are never bored. Students know how well they are doing and whether they are achieving their targets; teaching fosters self-assessment and independence in learning. Homework is purposeful and enhances the work done in lessons.
21. Less successful or unsatisfactory lessons lack many of the features described in good lessons. In weaker lessons, teachers do not use assessment effectively enough to check on the progress being made by all students and high attainers are not challenged and become bored. Occasionally, in mathematics for example, teachers do not possess sufficient expertise in the subject to teach it effectively. Opportunities are lost to extend students' achievement. Some teachers do not plan their lessons effectively. For example, learning objectives are not made clear and time is not allocated for checking on success

at the ends of lessons. There is sometimes a lack of clarity about what students are to learn and instead emphasis is placed on what activities they will undertake. A very small number of teachers do not manage classes effectively.

22. Teachers are well informed about students' special and individual needs. Guidelines are prepared for teachers which enable the majority of students with special educational needs to be taught within the mainstream classroom. Work is frequently planned to take into account the individual needs of students although this is not totally consistent throughout the school. Teaching assistants and support staff work closely alongside class teachers and are valued for their contributions and expertise. They make an effective contribution to students' progress.
23. Very good procedures for the identification and assessment of students with special educational needs are in place and are clearly understood by everyone. Class teachers and support assistants play a prominent role in monitoring targets and the overall progress of these students. Information is well documented to form detailed student profiles.
24. There has been improvement since the previous inspection. In this inspection there is significantly more teaching that is very good or excellent. There is only a small minority of unsatisfactory teaching, mainly in Years 7 to 9.

## Sixth form

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are **very good**. Teachers' use of assessment is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subject well and teach it with energy, enthusiasm and scholarship.
- Planning is very good, leading to high expectations and lessons that move at a fast pace.
- Students are well managed so that they engage with their work and their learning is effective.
- Teachers make very good demands upon students' thinking.
- Teachers use data to plan work and set realistic targets: they also intervene during lessons to ensure that students' learning is appropriate and effective.

## Commentary

25. Teachers present their work in a lively fashion, ensuring that it challenges students of all levels of attainment. The seminar-type approach in many lessons promotes a positive climate for learning with this age range of student. High expectations are encouraged and teachers seek imaginative ways to keep students' learning sharp and incisive. High levels of discussion arising from the very good relationships between students and teachers, consistent reference to examination specifications and the consolidation of new knowledge and understanding are strengths of teaching and learning in the sixth form. Assessment plays a key part in this preparation of students to achieve their best. Teachers are astute in the ways in which they persuade students to have high aspirations.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 54 lessons in the sixth form*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
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1 (2%)	23 (43%)	26 (48%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	0	0
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*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. Teaching in 3 lessons was not evaluated.*

26. Good planning, using a range of teaching approaches and the skilful use of encouragement, prompts the few diffident students to do their best most of the time. Complicated ideas are taught in an enterprising way, involving the students through challenging, probing questions. Sixth form teachers show scholarship and expertise in their subjects. This allows them to give clear explanations and prepare students well for examinations.
  
27. Sometimes teachers do not involve students enough in lessons. Occasionally this is because some teachers are less confident in their subject expertise at this level than the majority. In some mathematics lessons, for example, the teacher did not have a clear grasp of the topic being taught.

## The curriculum

Provision is **good overall** and is **very good** in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students have equal access to the curriculum and therefore there are no significant barriers to learning.
- The curriculum provides a very good range of opportunities, outside the school day, for students to study and participate in a range of activities.
- Learning opportunities for students with special educational needs are good.
- Accommodation is poor in some areas of the school and this situation is having an adverse effect upon the quality of teaching and learning.

### Commentary

28. Overall, the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and provides equally for all students. An appropriate amount of time is given to subjects and all statutory requirements are met with the exception of the requirements for a collective act of worship, which are not yet fully met. However, the school has a good and effective strategy to remedy this. A wide range of needs is met through a good range of courses.
29. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum except in mathematics. The match between qualifications and subjects taught is good with the exception of this subject. There are enough support staff. The staffing arrangements for supporting students with special educational needs are particularly good in science and ICT.
30. The breadth of curricular opportunities is good and enables students to develop in a well-rounded way. The curriculum is kept under review to ensure that what is offered is up to date and appropriate. Teaching time, which was deemed inadequate for Key Stage 4 at the last inspection, has now been increased. Religious education is offered to all students in Key Stages 3 and 4. Citizenship, a new subject since the last inspection, has been well co-ordinated, and students wishing to take a second foreign language no longer do so at the expense of physical education.
31. Although the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has had a good impact on the structure and quality of lessons, and literacy and numeracy are promoted not just in English and mathematics lessons but also through the other subjects, the strategy is not consistently monitored in a sufficiently rigorous way. ICT across the curriculum has also made some progress since the last inspection but it is not pursued with sufficient rigour and is at an early stage of development.
32. Opportunities for enrichment are good. A wide range of out-of-school activities is available and large numbers of students take part in sporting and arts-related activities. The curriculum is enhanced and supported through a good range of field visits and visitors to the school.
33. Students have the opportunity to follow courses out of school hours leading to qualifications in, for example, dance, music technology and photography.

34. Students with special educational needs have full access to a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. The curriculum is sufficiently broad, balanced and relevant to their needs. Students with special educational needs are well supported within the mainstream classroom and follow the same curriculum as their peers. A very good programme for gifted and talented students and an 'aim higher' programme provide students with enrichment and extension activities to stimulate them, both within and outside the classroom. The 'aim higher' initiative is designed to improve access to higher education for more able students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Prince's Trust club is a two-year option course run for students in Years 10 and 11. It is a non-examination course and is extremely successful in raising the self-esteem and aspirations of the students involved and for providing opportunities for them to prove their self-worth and improve their achievement.
35. Staffing levels are appropriate in the inclusion centre (a faculty arrangement for supporting pupils' individual needs and ensuring equality of access) and in the hearing impaired unit. However, the deployment of learning support assistants is not always effective and needs to be reviewed.
36. Very good accommodation situated in the heart of the school and comprising a suite of rooms is where all support facilities are housed together to form an inclusion centre. The unit for 17 deaf and hearing impaired students forms an integral part of this facility. A range of very good resources supports a wide range of learning needs but there are insufficient laptop computers.
37. The accommodation is generally unsatisfactory despite the efforts of the school to provide an environment which is encouraging to learning. Most of the separate buildings on the site are old and dilapidated and require frequent repairs and maintenance. Some of the pathways between them are uneven. Many of the corridors are narrow, resulting in much congestion at change of lessons. The old block housing the sixth form is far too small and totally inadequate for the large number of students. A social area is to be available in the near future for Years 10 and 11 but there are no such areas for younger students. The school does not have a sports hall or all-weather pitch. Despite commendable efforts by staff in the use of display there are many areas in the school which are not conducive to learning. This has an adverse effect on standards, for example in music and design and technology. The new City Learning Centre does provide very good facilities for the learning and resource centre and for some of the ICT.

### **Sixth form**

38. The sixth form curriculum is planned to ensure that all students have the opportunity to follow courses appropriate to their individual needs. A very wide range of A-level and vocational subjects is offered. Provision for religious education, an issue at the last inspection, remains inadequate.
39. As in the main school, large numbers of students avail themselves of the many sporting and arts-related activities which are offered.

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

The school's arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students are **good**. Support, advice and guidance for students, based on monitoring of their needs, is **good** overall. Involvement of students in the work and development of the school is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pastoral care and personal support for students are very good.
- There are very good arrangements to help students move smoothly through the different stages of their school lives.
- Provision for careers education and guidance is very good.
- Risk assessments are not formally completed for each department of the school.

### **Commentary**

40. Staff know students well and are always available to provide support, advice and guidance when they are needed. The pastoral system, through the work of form tutors and heads of year, provides a basic network for ensuring that any problems that arise for individual students are quickly identified and action is taken to resolve them. Complementing the system is a range of strategies, some internal, some provided by external specialists, to give more specific help. Learning mentors and behaviour support workers offer a link between students and teachers, providing counselling and support for individuals to help them make the most of school. A personal adviser from Connexions gives imaginative, practical support to students and their families, which has tangible results in encouraging students to remain within the education system and to benefit from the opportunities that exist there. Selected students in Year 9 appreciate the help of adults from local businesses, who give up their time to act as mentors, encouraging them to try harder and achieve more. The XL Club, a nationally accredited course offered as an option in Years 10 and 11, helps students develop basic skills, self-discipline and social awareness. Two community constables work alongside school staff, so that students who choose to follow this course can benefit from their experience and support. Whatever the need, the school has a system or strategy that can be put into place to help students achieve their full potential.
41. Both students and parents agree that arrangements for the transition from one stage of education to the next are very well managed. Strong links are established with the feeder primary schools, so that, as early as Year 5, pupils become familiar with teachers from the high school through a planned programme of lessons. When they take part in a 'taster day' in Year 6, pupils begin to complete their 'Passport to Allerton Grange', a comprehensive document that allows them to explore their personal strengths and weaknesses, preferred learning styles, interests, ambitions and concerns. The information this contains, together with academic and personal details provided by the primary schools, is carefully used to place pupils in appropriate groupings and identify any special support that might be needed. A very good induction day at the start of Year 7 helps students to make friends and adjust to their new environment, assisted by sixth form peer mentors, who give up their own time to support the new students. The whole process is underpinned by detailed information for students and their parents that covers all the practical things that they need to know.
42. Transition from Year 9 to Year 10 is equally well organised. Current and future form tutors liaise closely to ensure that all relevant documentation is passed on, so that appropriate support can be given to students wherever it is needed. Students and their parents



receive detailed written information on option choices, supplemented by personal interviews with staff. During Year 11, the careers education programme ensures that students have all the information they need to decide on the next step. If they choose to enter the sixth form, a detailed induction booklet tells them all they need to know, while a welcome party organised by existing sixth formers makes the actual move enjoyable.

43. Care, support and guidance of students with special educational needs are a strong feature of the school. There are clear procedures for their early identification and assessment, which are well known to most teachers. Students are very well supported throughout the curriculum. Individual education plans set appropriate targets which are regularly monitored and updated. Targets clearly reflect the recommendation of statements for students to whom this applies. High quality specialist teaching enables all students to fully access the curriculum. Legal requirements in respect of statemented students are fully met. The Code of Practice is in place and implemented effectively.
44. A comprehensive, well-organised careers education programme is taught throughout the school. It helps students to identify their aptitudes and preferences, to explore the wide range of options open to them and to make informed decisions about their future. Most students find the lessons useful and appreciate the help they receive in making choices. A well-stocked careers library, with access to appropriate computer programs, is available for students to do their own research. There is a planned programme of work experience geared to students' career interests, and individual interviews are offered to all students in Year 11, with the school's careers staff or with a specialist adviser from the Careers Service.
45. At the time of the previous inspection a key issue for action was to ensure that all departments understand and carry out risk assessments. Although the school now has good arrangements for health and safety, with most issues documented well, formal risk assessments have not yet been completed for all departments.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents, other schools and colleges and the local community.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are many strengths in the quality and range of information for parents.
- Good links with the local community contribute effectively to students' personal development.

### Commentary

46. The school communicates with parents in a variety of ways so that they can understand and support the personal and academic progress of their sons or daughters. Written information for parents is usually of high quality. It is well presented. For example, newsletters are professionally printed, illustrated nicely with photographs of students and written in a clear, accessible style. The content of booklets and leaflets produced specifically for parents is practical and useful, such as the helpful booklet for Year 11 students and their parents that highlights important dates and tasks for the year ahead. Student planners are used effectively by some teachers and parents as a means of communication, while the school's website gives parents ready access to much useful information. School reports vary in quality. Most give relevant details of students' strengths and weaknesses, but targets for improvement are sometimes insufficiently specific to help students know what they need to do to improve. The school recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents so that they are always contacted and involved as soon as any need is identified. Parents are always consulted about problems, such as those related to behaviour or attendance, but they are also kept up to date with improvements and successes. They are pleased to receive positive letters to celebrate students' achievements. Senior staff, particularly, make themselves available out of school hours to discuss issues or answer queries from parents. Many staff, for example the learning mentors and the EMAP (Ethnic Minority Attainment Project) teams, visit parents at home to advise and help with whatever concerns they may have. Most parents find staff approachable and are generally happy with the information they receive.
47. Relationships with the parents of students with special educational needs are strong. They are kept well informed and are supportive of what the school is trying to achieve. Consultation during review procedures ensures that parents are aware of and involved in target setting. Good attendance at annual reviews is indicative of the support most parents give their children.
48. The community placements that Year 10 students undertake as part of their citizenship course are the most striking example of community links, but there are a number of other links with the local community that have positive outcomes in relation to the students' personal and social development. Some of these also enhance the school's reputation with local people. Traditionally, the students organise a Christmas party for senior citizens, giving the students some entrepreneurial experience as well as making them aware of the needs of others. The school receives many letters of thanks and congratulation about this. Good relations with local residents are helped by simple actions like clearing up litter, which has resulted in a letter of approval from those living close to the school. Students undertake fund-raising activities and have close links with the nearby hospice. The school's premises are used by a wide range of community groups and

courses run at the adjacent City Learning Centre bring staff, students, parents and local residents together. Because the community constables help with the XL course and sometimes take part in assemblies and PSCE, students can develop a more balanced awareness of the role of the police in society. Similarly, those representatives of industry and commerce who help with the careers education programme, as business mentors or providers of work experience, help students to gain an insight into the world outside school.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership of the school by the headteacher is **very good**. Her vision and energy, along with the strong and very good support provided by key staff, have been instrumental in bringing about some decisive changes to the school over the past year. The school is **well** managed. Governors are **effective** and contribute notably to the school's leadership.

### Main strength and weaknesses

- The headteacher's vision, energy and ambition for the school, shared by others, have brought about significant improvements in a short time.
- The senior staff's commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity is excellent. This is an extremely inclusive school.
- Senior staff and those in other key positions work very well as a team and make strong contributions to the leadership and management of the school.
- Planning for improvement is very clearly focused on the raising of students' achievement.
- The school's finances are very well managed. Principles of best value are very well applied.

### Commentary

49. The headteacher provides very good leadership. She has a clarity and very strong sense of purpose which have brought about some decisive changes in structure and in the ethos of the school. All whole-school developments are very clearly aimed at raising standards for all.
50. The effects of this vision and ambition are showing in a number of ways. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with an above average amount which is very good and excellent. Standards and students' achievement are improving. The school is highly inclusive. Students are happy, well behaved and proud of their school. There is an open, enabling culture that builds confidence and self-esteem. Workforce reform has been very well used to define roles and responsibilities and to ensure effective support for both teachers and students.
51. Senior managers also provide good leadership and whole-hearted support for the headteacher. They are very good role models for staff and students, and have a strong approachable presence around the school. Through a well-established system of oversight and frequent dialogue, senior staff encourage middle managers to analyse and reflect on the work of their departments and areas of responsibility. Subject leadership is good in most departments and faculties although there are shortcomings in the leadership and management of design and technology and modern foreign languages across the school and of mathematics in the sixth form.
52. The classroom practice of every teacher is observed on a regular basis by senior staff. In some subjects teachers observe colleagues teaching. The arrangements for professional development are good. Much training is taking place addressing whole-school, departmental and individual needs. The major current focus is on sessions to further develop the qualities of teaching and learning. A group of middle managers meet regularly with a focus on the development of team leaders. Most of the training is done within school on closure days and during after-school sessions. The newly qualified teachers much appreciate the comprehensive programme of induction and the very effective support they receive. Similarly, the school provides very good training and support for trainee teachers.

53. The leadership and management of provision for students' special and individual needs, through the very large and diverse inclusion faculty, are good. The teacher in charge of inclusion provision has recognised that because of the diverse nature of the faculty there is a need to ensure that all initiatives are strongly embedded before embarking on new ones. Faculty documentation is of a high quality and students' records are comprehensive. Class teachers are well informed about students' individual needs and useful guidelines have been provided.
54. The governing body takes an active role in the leadership of the school. Through their commitment and the supportive and strategic vision governors bring to the school's development, they play a good part in shaping future direction and in challenging and supporting senior managers.
55. The school is well managed and runs efficiently. There are good systems to guide progress and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards. The school gathers and uses data effectively to analyse its performance and to compare it with that of similar institutions to ensure that the quality of provision is as high as it should be. Although there has been very good development in the collection and analysis of data recently, the use of data to set targets is not yet uniform across the school and this is recognised as an area for development.
56. Financial management is very good throughout the school with the school bursar providing very good and efficient information on which the school managers base decisions. The principles of best value are very well understood and applied to the management and use of resources.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	6348968	Balance from previous year	-94560
Total expenditure	6275113	Balance carried forward to the next	-20705
Expenditure per student	3686		

**OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

**Work-related learning**

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **very good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- WRL is well organised and well managed.
- Work experience is well organised and provides beneficial links between school and commerce and industry.
- WRL across the curriculum involves a number of subjects and connects to all areas of the WRL syllabus.
- WRL is fully inclusive, bringing benefits to all students from Years 7 to 13.

**Commentary**

57. A majority of students achieve above average standards in the vocational subjects offered by the school. All students on vocational courses have the opportunity of work experience, which is supported by cross-curricular links in the majority of subjects on their curriculum.
58. All aspects of the WRL provision have been carefully designed and managed. The provision is under regular review by the vocational education development group, the head of PSCE and the recently appointed co-ordinator for work experience.
59. A good range of vocational courses is offered in Years 10 and 11.
60. A number of subjects have identified curriculum strands which support WRL. In history and religious education, students are collecting evidence for decision making and learning to appreciate that people hold different views on a wide range of issues in society. Food technology teaches students about health and safety procedures in food industries. In modern foreign languages, students are given information on part-time jobs through GCSE coursework. Child development investigates childcare provision and the benefits to families. In drama students are provided with contact with visiting theatre groups.
61. Work experience is well organised. All students in Year 10 are involved on care placements involving half-day visits to nurseries, homes for the elderly and primary schools. During Year 11 all students have a two-week period of work experience and in Year 12 GNVQ students experience one day each week plus a two-week placement. A-level students have a two-week placement in Year 12.
62. Students receive good careers guidance. Careers education is given from Year 7 onwards, supported by the Connexions service. A number of students are involved in the 'NEET' initiative (students in danger of being Not in Education, Employment or Training). The local education authority (LEA) organises an annual careers fair and representatives from industry and commerce are regularly invited into the school.
63. The quality of teaching on vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 is good and very good in the sixth form. Teachers have a good command of their subjects and lesson planning is very good. Students' attitudes are good and often very good.

### **Deaf and hearing-impaired unit**

Provision for students who are deaf and hearing impaired is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Strong teamwork and very good relationships are significant strengths.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students are encouraged to be as independent as possible within a hearing community.
- There is a high level of commitment from students of all ages.
- There is a tendency to overwhelm some students with the written word.

### **Commentary**

64. Funded and resourced by the LEA, this unit currently supports 17 students with wide-ranging hearing impairment. It is well situated within the school and is an integral part of the inclusion centre. The unit successfully achieves its aim which is to produce

independent and responsible students. This is largely due to the fact that the school celebrates students' achievements and works hard to promote their independence and self-esteem. Deaf and hearing-impaired students make very good progress throughout their time in school. They play a full and active role in the school community, responding very well to the challenges that face them.

65. Students have different degrees of hearing loss and most use British Sign Language (BSL) all of the time. BSL and English are target languages and staff from the ethnic minorities are employed to cater for the needs of ethnic minority students. Lip reading clues and listening skills are encouraged whenever possible. The quality of support for students gives them good access to the curriculum. For some, this is enhanced on a regular basis by the provision of pastoral time where behaviour management and the improvement of self-esteem and confidence are prime concerns. A deaf studies curriculum is used for teaching about deaf culture, history and sign language.
66. The teaching of students who are deaf and hearing impaired is very good. Such is the commitment of a number of teachers in the school that they are following a BSL course to help them communicate better. Hearing students are also learning to improve their signing skills. Teaching within the resource base is of high quality, enabling students to achieve very well. Students are encouraged to follow a normal timetable as part of a mainstream class. Sometimes they are withdrawn to the base simply for the purpose of consolidating the work they have done in mainstream classes. Here, lessons are structured as they would be in the mainstream. Students are encouraged to develop ICT skills and are very competent.
67. Leadership and management of the Deaf and hearing-impaired unit are very good. Many improvements have been introduced since the arrival of the teacher in charge. She leads a very strong team of teachers of the deaf and support workers. She has also been instrumental in developing greater teacher awareness of the problems encountered by deaf students. A booklet for teaching and supporting deaf and hearing-impaired students provides excellent guidelines for teachers and classroom assistants. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

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

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **ENGLISH**

Provision for English is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good and often very good: this ensures students achieve well.
- Results in GCSE examinations are not as good as they should be.
- Very good leadership provides a good sense of direction and development of the department, the members of which work very well together as a team.
- The teaching and achievement of lower attaining students are very good.
- Teachers do not give sufficient support to the later stages of students' drafted essays.
- Access to ICT is limited owing to insufficient management of the resources at department and school level.

##### **Commentary**

68. Standards overall are average. As a result of good and often very good teaching, students achieve well, given their starting point at the beginning of Year 7. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average compared with the national average but well above average when compared with results in schools with a similar social background. In 2004 results seem to have improved but national comparisons are not yet available. Results in GCSE examinations in English have been below the national average in recent years: they were close to average in 2003 but dipped again in 2004. Those in English literature were above the national average in 2003 but not so good in 2004. However, the department is going through a period of change and development under its new leadership and work seen in both English and English literature is improving steadily; higher attainers in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards whilst lower attainers achieve well, both as a result of very good teaching.
69. Students in Years 7 to 9 are usually confident when speaking in class and they co-operate well when working in small groups. The students in Years 10 and 11 show even better skills of speaking and listening. Reading is generally good and students in Years 7 and 8 show their enthusiasm for reading in very good activities based in the Inclusion centre. Middle and higher attainers by Year 11 read aloud with fluency and expression. By this time there is no significant difference in standards attained between students from minority ethnic groups and all other students. All students with learning difficulties or for whom English is not their first language get well-managed and effective support from learning support assistants. Very good work on basic literacy skills is a feature of English lessons throughout the school and writing is generally secure and accurate in final pieces of work. However, this is not the case in earlier drafts, suggesting that understanding of some rules of grammar is not securely embedded in students' consciousness.



70. Teaching and learning are good. In Years 7 to 9 they are consistently good and usually very good in Years 10 and 11. The department has taken account of national strategies for Years 7 to 9 and applied the principles well throughout Years 7 to 11. Students are well supported in developing their skills of reading and writing although not always through marking at the middle stages of drafting. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and ensure that a lively pace engages and sustains the interest of students. Teachers are energetic and enthusiastic and know their subjects well. Their expectations are high: when teaching higher attainers they expect the highest possible standards; when teaching lower attainers, they do not patronise but use styles and language that also anticipate the highest possible standards. As a result, the achievement of all students is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**In an outstanding lesson with Year 11, a class of higher attaining students analysed sections of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens in order to determine his purposes in writing the story of Scrooge.**

Students were asked to brainstorm known literary devices in readiness for checking the use of some of them in the text to be studied. The teacher then asked for volunteers to read the final stave [chapter] of the story, the class having previously read the first stave with which the final stave was to be compared. Many volunteers were forthcoming and the teacher chose five, mainly boys, who read in turn with fluency and expression. Discussion of comparison and contrast followed. Students clearly had a good understanding of Dickens' social purpose in his writing and how this was represented on the conscience of Scrooge. In appraising this writing, students gave clear examples of why the social circumstances of the poor in 1843 were different from those of disadvantaged communities today. Through skilful questioning by the teacher, the students' outstanding grasp of literary conventions was soon clear; for example, they identified irony in the writing – wealth does not bring happiness. In contrasting the first and last staves they described the devices of antipathy and empathy. The teacher managed this discussion extremely well and pressed students to extend feelings of antipathy and empathy so that they then felt them themselves as well as identifying them as literary devices. This personal awareness in itself identified for them their felt understanding of Dickens' social commentary and purpose.

71. The new head of department is concerned to improve standards further; her very good leadership leads to a clear understanding amongst the team of teachers that the department must not settle for second best. Standards overall are higher and teaching better than at the time of the previous inspection, so improvement overall since 1999 is good. The management, whilst good, is not always rigorous enough, notably in ICT. At its best, ICT is used well, but generally these skills are not developed sufficiently on a regular basis.

#### **Basic skills: contributions made by other subjects to students' competence in literacy**

72. Overall, students have average standards in literacy. In earlier years the school undertook some serious study of ways of extending competence in these basic skills. At present, however, there is no co-ordination of ideas to assist the students' development; as a result departments are left to their own devices with varying outcomes of effectiveness. In history and physical education, literacy skills are weak amongst middle and lower attainers so that students have difficulty in representing their historical or theoretical knowledge well in written work. Boys' literacy skills are weak in design and technology and science despite technical language being displayed and used effectively. Effective support is provided in English and art and design so that writing and talking about their work are strengths of the students' development in literacy. Support given to students with hearing difficulties or those with learning difficulties is usually good. The teaching of literacy skills in mathematics is unsatisfactory.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Overall provision is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are well below national averages, and below those of other subjects at this school.
- There are shortcomings in the management of the subject.
- There is some excellent teaching in individual lessons.
- Individual teachers are keen to see improvements.
- Numbers opting to take languages in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are low.

## Commentary

73. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below national averages, and are below those of other subjects at this school. Girls obtain better results than boys. In 2004 more students gained a grade D in the GCSE examination than any other grade in French, German and Spanish; in German no student gained higher than grade B. Results vary between languages, however. Community languages results are better than those of European languages; these are reported in subsequent paragraphs. At the end of Year 9 standards vary between languages and are closer to national expectations, though still below the national average.
74. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory. In individual lessons it is good or very good, but progression year by year is inadequate. Many students do not have reference books to take home and rely on their own notes, which are often muddled or incomplete. They therefore cannot revise effectively and spend lesson time going over old ground, which hinders their progress. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily in lessons, although sometimes teachers compensate for the lack of in-class support by restricting their learning activities and lowering their expectations.
75. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in both key stages. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and there was some very good and some excellent teaching during the inspection. In the best lessons teachers motivate students by using a variety of activities, including games, songs and 'hands on' activities, and there is lively use of the foreign language. However, the picture is inconsistent and in some lessons opportunities are lost for students as well as teachers to exert themselves. Marking is most effective when it shows students what to do to improve, but again there is inconsistency between teachers. Some teachers make very good use of new technology to enliven lessons and motivate students but this is not widespread. There is limited availability of equipment in the language teaching areas.
76. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There are inconsistencies in standards across the faculty. There is some monitoring of teaching and learning by the subject leader and analysis of information from students' assessments, and the setting of targets, but these have not resulted in consistent improvement across the faculty. The library has a wide selection of modern resources for French, though not for the other languages.
77. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Results are now well below national averages. As at the last inspection, the use of ICT remains underdeveloped. Student numbers in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are low, reflecting the low profile of the subject.

## COMMUNITY LANGUAGES

### Punjabi and Urdu

Overall, the quality of provision in community languages is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are native speakers and have very good subject knowledge.
- Teaching is good overall, resulting in good learning.

- GCSE examination results in Panjabi and Urdu improved greatly last year.
- Students are generally very well behaved and keen to learn.
- Schemes of work need to be revised to make them more appropriate.
- Teaching materials are inadequate in both languages.

## Commentary

78. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average overall in community languages. However, standards in Panjabi are above the national expectations and in Urdu standards are average. Students start to learn Panjabi and Urdu in Year 7 with no or very little literacy skills. Achievement, judged against students' prior attainment, is generally good. Students have to master the script in order to write words, phrases and sentences. With continued hard work a majority of the students can write phrases, sentences and short paragraphs in Panjabi and Urdu by the end of Year 9. Students' answers to teachers' questions in class show that their listening and speaking skills are well developed and their pronunciation and intonation are good in both languages. All levels of attainment are well catered for.
79. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above the national average in Panjabi and average in Urdu. GCSE examination results for grades A\*-C in Panjabi in 2003 were below the national average but the results improved greatly in 2004 and were well above the national average.
80. In Urdu, GCSE examination results in 2003 for grades A\*-C were well below the national average. In 2004 results were in line with the national average, which is a big improvement.
81. Overall, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Students for whom English is an additional language make good progress.
82. The quality of teaching is good. Nine lessons were observed during the inspection. Teaching was very good in three, good in four and satisfactory in two lessons. In Panjabi teaching was good or very good. Where the quality of teaching was very good or good, lessons were very well planned and contained a variety of activities that motivated the students to work hard and learn. Where teaching was satisfactory, lessons were mostly teacher led and the opportunities to work independently in pairs or in groups were limited, resulting in a very small number of students losing interest. The strong relationships that teachers establish in the classroom result in students learning very well. Teachers are native speakers, have very good knowledge of their subject and use the language in the class with a positive effect on students' learning. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and this is a major factor in enabling them to achieve as well as they do.
83. Panjabi and Urdu are a part of the modern foreign languages faculty. The relationships in the faculty are good and have a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning. However, there are inadequate resources, such as a shortage of appropriate textbooks, and the teachers have to depend on worksheets. No textbooks were used in any of the lessons observed.
84. There was no separate report on community languages in the last inspection report, but comments on community languages were made in the report on modern foreign languages. Since the last inspection the GCSE examination results in Panjabi improved greatly in the last two years. Results in Urdu dropped in 2003 but improved greatly in

2004. The teaching of Urdu is much better now than it was during the last inspection. The shortage of appropriate book resources still exists. The use of ICT has improved and teachers have produced some good quality worksheets. Schemes of work need to be revised in the light of the National Curriculum; that will help teachers to plan their lessons more effectively.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in Year 9 are close to those expected.
- Standards in Years 8, 9 and 10 have shown good recent improvement due to the support of senior management and specialist help brought in from outside.
- Students' achievement by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is satisfactory overall.

- Assessment is not used effectively to plan work matched to individual needs.
- Some teachers lack sufficient subject expertise.
- There are some weaknesses in the management of this very large department.

## Commentary

85. In 2003, standards in the Year 9 tests were below average when compared with those in all schools and average when compared with those in similar schools. The targets based on attainment in earlier national tests were not achieved. Provisional results for 2004 suggest that standards have improved considerably and are likely to be close to the national average. In 2003, the numbers of students gaining A\*-C grades and A\*-G grades in the GCSE examinations were similar to the national average. Provisional results for 2004 suggest that there has been a large drop in numbers gaining grades A\*-C, but this group of students started with lower standards at the beginning of Year 10.
86. Students enter school with below average standards in mathematics, including mental arithmetic skills. Standards are broadly average in Year 9 in number and algebra, shape, space, measure and data handling but there is an unusually large number of students with low levels of attainment in problem solving. Standards are average in mental arithmetic. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Students with partial hearing, who are supported by a classroom assistant, achieve better than others due to the quality of the assistants' subject expertise and ability to translate into sign language. In lessons there are no obvious differences in the achievement of different groups of students. Standards in Year 11 are below average, although, based on the students' test results in Year 9, the students have achieved satisfactorily. Too many students do not present their work accurately and do not understand or use mathematical notation correctly.
87. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lesson observations and the analysis of students' work show that there is too much unsatisfactory teaching but that this is exceeded by teaching that is good or better. Most teachers identify, use and explain subject-specific vocabulary, though they do not often display the words for students to see or expect students to use them or spell them correctly. Where teaching is most effective, class routines are well established and student management and class control are good. Teachers use different teaching styles to make sure that all students are involved in the lesson and to assess understanding at each stage. Work is explained carefully and clearly presented to develop good work habits and correct the use of notation. In these lessons teachers are enthusiastic and students respond by showing a real interest in their work. Weaker aspects of teaching are often linked to teaching methods that do not engage or interest students and do not take account of their understanding. In some lessons, teachers demonstrate a lack of mathematical expertise or of class management and control. Day-to-day assessment, including marking and its use to plan work matched to the needs of individuals or groups within sets, is inconsistent. Insufficient use is made of individual education plans to provide specific tasks that help students with special educational needs meet their targets or teachers and support assistants to track their progress towards these targets. Too few teachers have a secure enough grasp of the most recent national guidelines and methods that help students develop better mental arithmetic skills and strategies for calculation. Teachers are beginning to provide opportunities for students to use ICT to support learning, but these are few and far between. There is a lack of up-to-date resources to help teachers present lessons more efficiently and make use of each other's ideas and experience.

88. Leadership and management are both satisfactory although there are weaknesses in both. The subject manager has high aspirations, is trying to carry through initiatives that meet the school's ambitions and goals, and sets a good example in the classroom. Teaching and the standards of students work are checked, but the process lacks rigour. The written guidance for teachers is insufficient to enable teachers to be held to account for the lack of consistency in practice across the large department. Some changes have been made to the curriculum based on an evaluation of examination results but the careful tracking of students to identify those who are underachieving, and the use of target setting for individuals and teachers, are in the early stages of development. Resources are steadily improving but there are not enough to support learning. For example, there are insufficient textbooks, calculators, and practical equipment to help those with special educational needs and low attainment. There are insufficient specialist teachers of mathematics to meet the demands of the curriculum. The dilapidated state of the accommodation is not conducive to learning. The school has rightly identified provision in mathematics as an area of focus by the senior management team and is providing the necessary support and guidance to improve provision. Good use has been made of support from the LEA to improve test results in Year 9 but this has not yet had time to affect results in Year 11. Recent improvement in provision is satisfactory.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

89. The school has appointed a co-ordinator and undertaken a training day in this aspect of the curriculum. The consistent development of numeracy skills through other subjects and the co-ordination between the topics taught in mathematics lessons and those needed in other subjects are at an early stage. Where specific numeracy skills are required which the students lack, for example data-handling in geography and science, they are taught through the subject. In general, students' calculation skills are sufficient to support learning except in Year 7, where their lack of mental arithmetic skills impedes learning.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 are average.
- Good teaching and students' positive attitudes enable them to achieve well and make good progress.
- The subject is well led and managed and teachers are deployed effectively.
- Students usually know how well they are doing but do not always know how to improve.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support learning and teaching.

### **Commentary**

90. The results in the national tests for 14 year olds in 2003 were below national averages and well below those of similar schools. Apart from a dip in 2002 the results have been below average but following the national rising trend. In 2004 the results were significantly better.

91. The proportion of students gaining A\*-C grades in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were below the national averages and in line with those of similar schools. Overall, boys

performed in line with the girls but girls gained a higher proportion of A\* and A grades. In 2004 the results were similar to those of 2003.

92. Students enter the school with below average standards. The majority of them, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. By the end of Years 9 and 11 standards are average. Students in Year 7 soon learn how to co-operate well with each other and to work safely and productively in a laboratory. Skills required in practical investigations develop well to reach expected levels by the end of Year 11. Students' numeracy skills enable them to perform scientific calculations and to process their experimental results. They are careful in the use of correct terminology and units and present their work well. Gifted and talented students also achieve well.
93. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All of the teaching was at least satisfactory; three quarters was good or better and almost one half was very good or excellent. A particular strength is the quality of relationships between students and teachers. Students behave well, listen carefully and respond willingly. These are major factors in helping students learn well. Lessons are very well planned and cater well for the differing needs of individual students. Teachers know their subject well and make it comprehensible often by using examples to which students readily relate. Questioning is skilful and teachers usually draw out information and check understanding well. However, sometimes they do not fully exploit their very good knowledge of individual students by targeting questions to focus them and keep them on task. Students are managed well and group activities are conducted in a safe, orderly manner. Most lessons proceed at an appropriate pace but occasionally students are moved on to the next task before completing the previous one. Teachers do much to improve the students' literacy skills. Key words are frequently emphasised and the meanings of new ones carefully explained. Students' work is marked regularly but the comments do not always suggest how students could improve. Support assistants work well with teachers in planning lessons and promoting good learning. The good teaching often results from the implementation of the National Strategy for Key Stage 3. In the best lessons a starter activity engages students right from the start. Objectives are shared with students. A wide range of activities follows, including demonstrations, lively exposition, discussion and group work. In the final part teachers carefully check the students' understanding.
94. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed faculty head has identified areas for improvement. He is already implementing strategies to improve assessment. His classroom practice is a role model for others. Teachers are well qualified and deployed effectively, making good use of specialisms and expertise with particular groups. Teachers' performance is carefully monitored and classroom observations occur regularly. There are opportunities for teachers to observe the classroom practice of colleagues. The five newly qualified teachers are receiving much appreciated very good support. Technical support is of a high quality.
95. The curriculum now has added breadth with GCSE courses in single and double award science. Students are assessed regularly but they are not always aware of their targets or of how to improve. A lack of resources within the laboratories is limiting the use of ICT to aid teaching and learning.



96. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teaching is now much better; the quality of marking, homework tasks and assessment procedures has improved; more resources have been provided; students' achievement and progress are better.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and average by the end of Year 11. This improvement results from the good quality of teaching and students' good attitudes to work.
- Achievement is good by the end of Year 11.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Progress since the last inspection is good.
- Assessment is satisfactory, but students need to be made aware of their National Curriculum levels and how to improve.
- Accommodation is cramped and display throughout the department is uninspiring.

### **Commentary**

97. The first group of Year 11 students attempting GCSE will take their final examinations in 2005. In previous years, students could take short courses only.
98. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is below average. In the most recent end of Year 9 teachers' assessments, the percentage of students gaining level 5 and above was 12 per cent below national averages, but showed an improvement over the previous year. This, however, represents satisfactory achievement as they enter school with only average skills and on a limited range of applications in ICT. Students quickly become competent in logging on to the network, accessing programs and being responsible for saving and printing their own work. Most students cope well with word processing and enhance texts by adding pictures captured from the Internet or from files, but low levels of literacy are preventing many students from gaining highly when working with words. They strengthen their numeracy skills when working on spreadsheets and gain logic skills when using databases. Most students attain well when working with control programs as they find them interesting and enjoyable and make good efforts to get, for example, a lighthouse to flash or a set of traffic lights to work in the correct sequence.
99. By the end of Year 11, the standards seen in lessons and in students' work files are satisfactory and achievement overall is good. Work in Years 10 and 11 is more demanding and students have to be self-reliant when solving realistic problems. Most students produce enough work in their files and, on the network, show skill in accessing and using information, word processing, presentations and the use of databases and spreadsheets. They all know about the moral and social implications of using ICT in business, industry and leisure. Analysis is good, especially from the higher attaining students as they can spot errors quickly and use sensible strategies to get themselves out of difficulties and edit their work. Most students keep their files in logical order, annotate printouts to remind themselves of how they arrived at solutions and justify their decisions clearly. A few students lack concentration in lessons and do not produce enough work and need help to set realistic deadlines and keep to them.

100. The quality of teaching overall is good and brings about good learning. The teachers know their subject thoroughly and are enthusiastic about ICT, which in turn motivates students and lifts standards. They often use computer-linked screens or interactive whiteboards to ensure that students see exactly what happens and the correct sequence for success. Lessons usually proceed as planned, with clear introductions and instructions, ample time for students to do their own work and short sessions at the end to strengthen the understanding and to issue homework. Questioning is good. Teachers ensure that students have understood the basic work before progressing to the next stages and use students' answers effectively to stretch the learning. During practical sessions, teachers check progress and intervene if students are struggling or not attaining highly enough. Most students are well behaved and have good attitudes to ICT so that, during lessons, students are not unduly distracted by the few who do not listen and cannot settle to work speedily enough. Marking varies between the teachers. At best it is clear with marks and useful comments to help students improve but occasionally it is confined to ticks and congratulatory comments. Many students are not informed of their National Curriculum levels so they do not know how well they are doing for their age.
101. Leadership and management are both good. The department has made a good response to the comments made in the last inspection report. The new head of department is effective and a new and very skilled technical support manager and a new technician have strengthened the department; staff can now attend courses to gain extra skills. The quality of teaching has improved, standards have risen, the GCSE course is now offered to students in Years 10 and 11 and students who are gifted and talented may opt to take this in Year 9. Resources have improved with the provision of more and better computers and equipment. The curriculum is broader and now satisfies requirements, and control technology is now a strength. The department recognises the need to create better learning resources for students with special educational and language needs and to improve the system of assessment, especially for those in Years 7 to 9. The accommodation, although improved, remains cramped and display is poor because it rarely celebrates students' assessed work to inspire others.

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

102. The use of ICT by most other subject departments is unsatisfactory although it has improved since the last inspection. Many teachers have received recent training in the use of ICT in the classroom but most are not demonstrating these skills with students. In the departments of geography, music, physical education and special educational needs, the equipment is often used to allow students to access and work on information, compose and play music, record fitness levels, monitor heart rates, explore databases and make presentations. Other departments, such as history, mathematics, and science, occasionally use computers for word processing, spreadsheet exercises and experiments. Remaining departments hardly ever include ICT in planning and miss opportunities to allow students to use and build on their ICT skills. Most departments accept that there is a need to improve the amount of computer work, but do not have the equipment or programs to do it, nor easy access to spare computer rooms. The new co-ordinator has made a start in assessing teachers' capability, department training and resource needs, but the monitoring of ICT across the curriculum is at a very early stage of development.

## **HUMANITIES**

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, characterised by varied, well-paced and purposeful activities.
- Teachers explain key historical ideas and terms clearly so students understand them.
- Students discuss issues confidently and sensibly in both groups and whole classes.
- Assessment does not link data targets and student improvement clearly enough.

### Commentary

103. Standards in Year 9 in 2003 were clearly below average, according to teacher assessments, although the present Year 9, where students have developed key historical skills of handling sources, recognising bias and understanding change, is working closer to average standards. The present Year 7 students, however, are below average owing to poor literacy, especially amongst students whose writing skills are not as good as their speaking skills. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. GCSE results in 2003 were a little above the national average and the school figure improved significantly in 2004. Classroom observation and the analysis of students' work confirmed that the present Years 10 and 11 students are on target to match or better these results.
104. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Students learn to understand complex questions such as the role of the church in mediaeval England but limited writing skills prevent many students from developing ideas on paper. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good and for some very good. Students have good subject knowledge, write accurately and discuss their conclusions intelligently. Lower attaining students, aiming at entry-level examinations, handle original sources confidently. In all years students from ethnic minorities achieve as well as others. Students with special educational needs progress particularly well in Year 10.
105. Teaching and learning are good in all years. The variety of methods used in class is impressive. 'Showboards' ensure quick-paced question sessions whilst football reports used to illustrate historical bias engage the students' interest. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures classroom discussions have a sound basis whilst their effective class management guarantees that discussions are purposeful. Students complete useful writing tasks but more assignments involving writing extended pieces (including opportunities for developing creativity) would benefit their literacy. Work is well marked with helpful, constructive comments. However, assessment, including students' self-assessment, does not sufficiently link target grades with what needs to be done to achieve them, especially in Key Stage 3. Behaviour in Years 10 and 11 is very good and the friendly, hardworking atmosphere in classes is a significant factor in student achievement. Whilst this is also true of most classes in Years 7 to 9, in some lessons low level disruptive behaviour by a few inhibits the effectiveness of learning.
106. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is an effective role model and has clear priorities, placing emphasis on improving teaching and learning. He has encouraged teamwork and produced useful documentation. Whilst the department is now better resourced than previously, more colourful resources would further stimulate interest.

107. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Lessons are now well structured, teaching is being monitored, access to ICT has been improved (although it could be further developed) and fieldwork takes place.

## **Geography**

The overall provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good leadership is providing clear targets for improvement.
- Students achieve well because teaching is good.
- Teachers share resources generously and support each other very well.
- Standards are well below average when students enter the school and below average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Assessment procedures have improved significantly but do not yet provide all students with precise targets for improvement.

### **Commentary**

108. In the GCSE examination in 2003, results were better than in the previous year but were still below the national average. Boys' results were lower than those achieved by girls. In 2004, results remained below average.

109. The work seen during the inspection shows that students have very low levels of geographical knowledge when they enter the school. Students in Year 7 lack confidence in using numbers so that it is difficult for them to develop essential map skills. Good teaching enables students to achieve well from this very low baseline. By the end of Year 9, standards have improved but are still below national expectations. Achievement is very good in lessons where teachers plan challenging activities and have very good strategies for managing behaviour in the classroom.

110. In Years 10 and 11, standards are below average. However, students who opt to study geography achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Many boys and girls do better in geography than in their other subjects. The department is developing activities to extend the achievement of the higher attaining students whilst also providing good support for lower attaining students and for those with special educational needs.

111. Teaching and learning are good overall. Well-qualified teachers share ideas and resources regularly and are united in their efforts to raise attainment. The best lessons are conducted with pace and energy, using high quality resources that fire students' imaginations and help them to extend their learning. The use of ICT is planned into schemes of work in order to increase students' skills, for example through the use of a whiteboard linked to computer programs. However, the availability of other types of computer equipment in classrooms is very limited and students' lack of access to essential resources in non-specialist rooms restricts their progress. Since the last inspection there has been a significant development in the quantity and quality of local investigations and field trips which enrich students' experience. Strategies for marking students' work and assessing their achievement regularly have improved since the last inspection. In the best examples, teachers show students how well they are doing, give

them specific targets for improvement and involve students in this process. However, this very good practice is not consistently applied across the department. In the small proportion of lessons where learning is less successful, planning is inadequate and does not help students to build up their knowledge accurately.

112. Leadership and management are good overall. Following a period of extensive staff changes, the department now has a recently appointed and enthusiastic leader with a clear vision for future success. Opportunities for raising the profile of geography are seized and there has been a significant increase in the number of students choosing to study this subject in Years 10 and 11. Essential strategies for improvement, for example through the development of schemes of work, are now in place and are beginning to have an impact on raising attainment. However, there is not yet a rigorous process for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and the evaluation of its impact, or for the detailed analysis of the performance of different groups of students. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## Religious education

The provision of religious education is **very good** at both key stages and the subject makes a significant contribution to the academic development of students and to their general personal development.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Standards achieved by students in external examinations are well above average.
- Students' enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the subject are good.
- The accessing and use of school ICT facilities are limited.

## Commentary

113. The attainment of students in Years 7 to 9 is generally average and sometimes above average. Students are knowledgeable of the three world religions present in the school population, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. Students bring a lively interest to the classroom and levels of concentration are good; they are able to work independently and collaboratively in a disciplined learning environment. The development of students' understanding of the core beliefs of the religions studied is an area where learning can be improved.

114. Attainment of Year 10 and 11 students who all follow a certificated course is always at least average and sometimes above average. Attainment of those students following the full GCSE course in religious studies is very good, with performance being well above the national average. Ninety-one per cent of students following the half GCSE course attained A-C grades. These results are indicative of students working hard. Students not following a GCSE course submit their work for certification in the NPRA scheme. Overall, this position represents a considerable strengthening of the subject since the last inspection and makes a very good contribution to overall school improvement.

115. Teaching is consistently good and frequently very good. A scholarly classroom ethos challenges students and engages them as active learners and thinkers. A good range of

resources is utilised in lessons, and time is well managed. The school now has a strong team of specialist teachers and the positive team spirit prevailing bodes well for the further development of the subject in the school.

116. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has clear priorities, placing emphasis on improving teaching and learning and the development of the subject across the school. Teamwork has been developed and there has been a very good level of improvement since the last inspection report. Resources for learning are very good, although there is a need to further develop the use of ICT throughout the subject.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in textiles are above average because the subject is well taught and managed.
- Standards in graphics at GCSE level are good because teaching benefits from very good subject knowledge.
- The development of good practice in food technology is raising attainment levels.
- Standards are poor in resistant materials because teaching is ineffective.
- The subject lacks a sense of direction because leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 lacks rigour because it is not well matched to National Curriculum levels.
- The use of ICT as a tool for learning, designing and manufacturing is unsatisfactory.

#### Commentary

117. In 2003 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate standards well above those found nationally. In 2004 these assessments were also above the national average. Inspection evidence demonstrates that overall standards are below the national average across the material disciplines of the subject. Standards are high in textiles and graphics, improving in food technology, but well below average in systems and resistant materials. By the end of Year 9 students do not have well-developed design or manufacturing skills and their knowledge base is inadequate for the demands of GCSE courses. Progression in these skills is inhibited by a lack of continuity in teaching as students move on the rotation system, from one specific material area experience to the next. For example, drawing skills developed in graphic modules are not transferred and used as students move on to other modules.

118. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were in line with the national average. However, students overall did not achieve as well as they did across their other subjects. Girls' grades were above average overall but boys' grades were below the national average. In 2004, standards were well below the national average overall. In textiles and Child Development results were above average, and results in graphic products and food technology were just below average. Very poor grades in systems and control and resistant materials, both groups largely composed of boys, accounted for the drop in standards from the previous year. Poor standards were observed in resistant materials, but the appointment of a new teacher for systems and control is beginning to raise standards in this aspect of the subject. Where GCSE courses are well taught, students achieve well in relation to their ability. Students with special educational needs and those with hearing impairment also achieve in line with their abilities.

119. In Years 10 and 11 students have good attitudes to work. They are supportive of one another, co-operate well with staff and become increasingly independent. In Years 7 to 9 attitudes and behaviour are only satisfactory because immature behaviour and a lack of listening skills make learning difficult in some lessons. There are high levels of racial harmony and all groups of students are well catered for in lessons.

120. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. However, there is variation in the quality of subject knowledge and in teaching skills between the teachers. Very good teaching was observed in textiles and some food technology lessons. There was one unsatisfactory lesson in resistant materials. Most teachers plan lessons well, share learning objectives with the class and have high expectations. In Years 7 to 9, insufficient attention is given to developing the full range of design skills, especially those of writing specifications and evaluating against the specification. Progression in skills is unsatisfactory overall and particularly weak in resistant materials. Insufficient time is allowed at the end of lessons to systematically evaluate learning. Teaching assistants effectively support students with special educational needs and students with hearing impairment, enabling these students to make satisfactory progress.
121. Assessment is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because the systems used are not based on progression against the National Curriculum levels. Consequently students are not sufficiently aware of the standard of their work and what they need to do to move up to the next level. In Years 10 and 11 assessments are more closely linked to GCSE assessment criteria but interim marking of projects is not always sufficiently rigorous to ensure that students reach their school targets.
122. Leadership and management of the faculty are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of vision and sense of purpose for the subject. In Years 7 to 9 there is little cohesion between the teachers, who do not build effectively on the learning in one aspect of the subject, by making real connections for students in their work in a different area. Review and evaluation are inadequate. Consequently, improvement plans are not well targeted at key areas of weakness. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is poorly planned and undemanding. It is still not thoroughly mapped to ensure good coverage of the National Curriculum. The use of ICT as a key tool for learning and progression in the subject is unsatisfactory. It is poorly planned in schemes of work. Access to hard and software resources is unsatisfactory. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and this is having a negative impact on standards overall. It is particularly poor in the workshops and for systems and control. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory, but the recent appointment of a faculty deputy has begun to have a positive impact on change.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Overall the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weakness**

- Standards are above the national average in GCSE examinations.
- Good, often very good, teaching is generating good achievement from Year 7 to Year 9 and in GCSE examinations in Year 11.
- There is a lack of opportunity for students to experience computers in art.
- The professional relationship between the teachers and students creates a very good learning partnership.
- The management of the department is good, promoting high expectations and high standards from students.



- Assessment, in particular the marking of work, does not advise students on how to improve.

## Commentary

123. On entry into Year 7 the skills, knowledge and understanding of students are generally below expectations. By the end of Year 9 teacher assessment and scrutiny of work indicate that standards are average for a majority and above average for a significant minority. All students have access to a wide range of materials and experiences. Teaching is good and students respond well. Therefore achievement is good for all.
124. In the GCSE examinations, standards were above the national average in 2003 and show a similar outcome in 2004. Almost all students entered for GCSE examinations gain a pass. The average points score for students in art is significantly better than the combined average for all their other subjects. In all lessons there exists a good learning partnership between the teachers and the students and therefore achievement is good.
125. The quality of teaching is good, often very good. Lesson planning is very effective. A majority of lessons are challenging and students usually respond to the challenge. The personal development of the students is improving because they are encouraged to develop opinions through discussion, share ideas and assist in the distribution and collection of materials and equipment. Language skills are improving because key words are introduced into most lessons as part of the school literacy policy. Opportunities for the promotion of numeracy are limited but concepts of scale, proportion, perspective, area and volume are introduced. Regular references are made in most lessons to the work of significant artists and cultures in order raise creative and visual appreciation. The classrooms and surrounding areas contain some impressive displays of work, promoting high standards. Assessment is satisfactory but fails to inform many students on how to improve. Work is marked and homework is set regularly and used effectively as a preparation or reinforcement for lessons.
126. The management of the department is good. Schemes of work are well planned and provide all students with a range of creative opportunities. Teachers work as an effective team. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Resources are adequate but the provision of digital cameras, computers, and art-related software is inadequate, resulting in lost opportunities to extend students' knowledge through research and to develop new skills. The accommodation is barely satisfactory, consisting of a collection of small classrooms with inadequate storage space. The poor accommodation was mentioned in the previous inspection. Most of the furniture is old, damaged and in need of replacement. The collection of reference books in the department was considered unsatisfactory on the previous inspection and has not improved significantly. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good. Visits are arranged to galleries and other places of interest, visiting artists work with students, competitions are entered and after-school sessions are available for interested students.

## Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have been consistently high in recent years and significantly above the national average.
- Very good teaching results in students' achievement being very good.
- Relationships are very good, especially in Year 11; they contribute to the students' success.
- The teachers see themselves as learners; they plan together, observe each other teach and share good practice.
- Accommodation for drama falls short of modern good provision.

## Commentary

127. Only one Year 11 drama lesson was observed. However, the examination results speak for themselves and the very good work in Years 12 and 13 is testimony to the effective work done in earlier years.
128. Standards are high by Year 11. Results of tests and GCSE examinations mirror these standards. In 2003, GCSE results were high in comparison with the national average and those for 2004, overall, are better still. A feature of GCSE results is the percentage of students who attain A\* or A grades; this was almost half of all students in 2004. Students' very good attitudes contribute to their outstanding achievement.
129. The observation of one lesson indicates clearly that students have learned to use a variety of dramatic conventions throughout their drama course from Year 7 onwards. In a Year 11 class, students were tackling sensitive work in readiness for an imminent visit from a theatre-in-education company. They focused on a physical representation of what could be a dire situation – teenage parenthood. However, the teacher imaginatively required students to express this through stereotypical movement and speech, exaggerated physically almost beyond reality. The result of this, whilst funny on the surface, released sensitivity and understanding of the myriad of social issues the work was really about. This led the teacher skilfully to focus the lesson to take account of the quality of this thinking. The department wants thinking to be key to good drama. In order to attain high standards the drama is not allowed to settle for the cliché, shallow or tabloid newspaper response. Teachers emphasise that such a response represents a low level of skill. Intervention in the lesson was used successfully to give support to lower attaining students or to those with special educational needs and to challenge the highest attaining students. As a result all students take a full part, for all are included in the learning process.
130. The department shares good practice and supports the work of other departments. For example, six students with hearing impairment from Years 7 and 8 were successful in role-play designed to build their confidence in communicating with people. Similarly, an English teacher successfully used role-play with Year 8 students as a means of investigating a short passage of text.
131. It is not possible to judge the quality of leadership owing to the long-term absence of the teacher involved. Management, however, is very good as the team of teachers is working well through co-operation and the sharing of expertise. A newly qualified teacher is being well supported and is a very effective member of the department. The department is always seeking to improve on its previous best. It continues to work without a well-equipped drama studio and at sixth form level this has sometimes been a barrier to the recruitment of students. Improvement since 1999 has been sustained, for results now stay reliably at a high level and teaching is at least as good as it was at that time.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, with some very good, even excellent, lessons.
- The social and cultural development of students is particularly strong.
- There is very good use of ICT, linked to National Curriculum levels, within the subject.
- Students are offered a broad range of musical opportunities.
- The department has an open access policy, of which many students make good use.
- There are frequent opportunities for students to take responsibility.
- All teachers are enthusiastic in their recording and celebration of students' work.
- Accommodation is insufficient. The department does its best to minimise the adverse effects of using a non-specialist room.
- There are some good resources, which are very well used, but most percussion instruments are tired and old.

### Commentary

132. Standards are satisfactory overall at both key stages, although never less than satisfactory in Year 11. GCSE results continue to be above the national average; end of Key Stage 3 assessments show improvement year on year, with an increase in the proportion gained of levels 5 and above. Students' achievement is good overall, with examples of very good achievement at both key stages. Where achievement is less than good, it is the result of some negative attitudes and the behaviour of a small minority of the students. In the one lesson seen where standards were unsatisfactory, the Year 8 students were working at a lower level on primary chords than in other Year 8 classes. Students with learning or language disabilities are making progress equal to the rest of their peers. Year 8 and 9 students display an advanced sense of harmony and good keyboard skills, are confident performers, use ICT well and sing enthusiastically, if not always tunefully. Some students studying for the GCSE examination can play a number of different instruments and are enthusiastic performers.
133. Teaching and learning are good overall, with over three-quarters of the lessons judged to be good or better. All lessons in Key Stage 4 were good or very good, whilst Key Stage 3 lessons ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Features of this area of strength are: high expectations, good encouragement of independent learning, very good pace, excellent subject knowledge, very good lesson planning, good relationships with students, effective use of resources, differentiation, and good knowledge of the students and their abilities. Of particular note is the consistently very good use of starter, warm-up activities by all the teachers. This strategy ensures that students are on task quickly and thinking musically.
134. The very good leadership of the department is exemplified by the dynamic drive for improvement, consistency and enthusiastic participation. The head of department has a clear vision for the department which is supported by thorough documentation and shared by the other music teachers. This results in a consistency of approach in lessons, enhanced by the teachers' individual strengths. All lessons are well planned, underpinned by clear learning objectives that are shared with the students. There is also good assessment that is used to chart students' progress throughout the school and to adapt the scheme of work to their needs. Baseline assessment on entry is embryonic.
135. Of all the factors affecting the department, the lack of sufficient specialist accommodation is key. There are only two music rooms, even though three music lessons are frequently

timetabled to run concurrently. Equally, the two main music rooms lack soundproofing, making listening work difficult, and there is inadequate space for group work, practice and peripatetic music lessons. All of the staff do very well to minimise the adverse effects of this problem, as well as the paucity of quality percussion instruments. The music department is perceived as a social centre for students and, therefore, the opportunities for music making outside of lessons are both numerous and varied. The enthusiasm for these activities is best exemplified by the many invitations received from the young musicians to attend their practices. The music department makes particularly good use of ICT, both in the classroom and in the City Learning Centre, where a technician is available to offer expert advice on an ever-increasing bank of music samples and software. The music curriculum is broad and offers many examples of music from many different cultures. This is enhanced by a full range of activities, including lessons from supportive visiting teachers. Instrumental and vocal lessons are subsidised by the school.

136. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards have risen in Key Stage 3, planning is now exemplary, including for differentiation, and all students receive their music entitlement. The only remaining weakness from the last inspection is that in accommodation and resources.

## **Physical education**

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

### **Main strengths and weakness**

- Standards are above average throughout the school and are reflected in good examination results.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good or better due to the very good management and discipline of students.
- Very good planning and high expectations are a strong feature of this department.
- Very good resources are effectively used to improve the quality of students' work.
- Very good leadership and management ensure a high level of commitment.
- Very good extra-curricular sporting provision complements a curriculum that fully complies with legal requirements.

## **Commentary**

137. High standards in examinations at GCSE and A-level are the result of the very good consolidation of students' work throughout the school. In 2003 all students entered for GCSE achieved a pass, with almost half achieving A\*-C grades. These results were above the national average. Of the four students taking A-level examinations, all were successful, with half achieving A or B grades. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls are not significant. There has been a steady increase over the last three years in the number of students taking the examination, particularly girls. The syllabus has recently been changed and students who were unable to cope with the high standards of literacy required to answer some questions now have better access to the course. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language are well supported and make good progress.

138. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average, indicating satisfactory achievement. Students develop good hand/eye co-ordination in badminton and netball. They have clear

understanding of the rules of the game. Safe practice is a strong feature of gymnastics lessons, where apparatus is handled appropriately. Sequences of movement are well planned but students have to work hard to improve the overall quality of their movement. Particularly good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is responsible for standards that are frequently above average, and achievement is good. The majority of students are capable of using their taught skills in a game. A good example of this is the use of defensive and attacking heading at the appropriate time in football. Year 11 GCSE students are particularly good at incorporating agility, speed, strength and stamina into their very rigorous football lessons. Girls perform particularly well in hockey. They pass the ball accurately and receive passes in a controlled manner, analysing their movement as part of their coursework. Girls and boys perform complicated and synchronised footwork routines in dance and produce work that is of high quality. Working under test conditions in theory lessons, the majority of students show a clear understanding of the skeleton, associated muscles and their function. In the sixth form students are beginning to develop their knowledge of biomechanics to a high level.

139. Teaching is very good overall. Excellent teaching was observed in Year 11. The management and discipline of students are a particular strength. Teachers are energetic and enthusiastic and they have high expectations. Knowledge of their subject area is very secure and provides students with a sound base upon which to develop their skills. Teachers plan their work very well ensuring that all elements of the attainment target are incorporated into lessons. This provides students with very good opportunities to evaluate their own efforts and those of others. Because relationships are so good, students respond very well and enjoy their activities.

140. A team of specialist teachers is very well led and managed. They give up a great deal of their time to provide a wide range of out-of-hours activities. The school has recognised the need for a clear baseline of achievement when students enter the school. This will support the very good assessment procedures that are already well established. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Accommodation still remains unsatisfactory.

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

### **Citizenship**

Overall provision is **good**.

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

- The introduction of the subject into the school has been very well planned.
- The harmonious multi-cultural school community fosters tolerance and understanding.
- Opportunities for students to participate in responsible action are very good.
- Assessment is still in the early stages of development.
- An audit to determine where citizenship is already taught through other subjects has not yet been fully completed.

## **Commentary**

141. The school as a whole values and esteems the varied cultural backgrounds represented within it. As a result, students have an awareness of their responsibilities towards others, which is higher than is found nationally. Standards in citizenship within individual subjects vary depending on the subject and on individual teachers: some subjects make students aware of citizenship and promote it actively and energetically, others less so. Overall, standards are high. Standards of participation in 'taking responsible action' are very high.
142. Students' achievement is good. The ethos of the school ensures that students of different races and backgrounds learn to value each other very highly: by the time they reach the sixth form students display an excellent awareness of, and respect for, the backgrounds of others. This is reflected in many ways every day. Opportunities to reflect on their duties as citizens and to take responsible action promote good progress as students move up the school.
143. Teaching and learning are good. The relaxed and harmonious school community promotes good attitudes in its young citizens and makes them well aware of their opportunities and obligations. Through the CARE programme in Year 10, in which all students spend half a day a week for eight weeks in service to others, and through charitable fund-raising events and the school council, for example, students have very good opportunities to take responsible action. The well-planned PSCE programme includes visitors from, for example, the Samaritans, the police and the fire service, and a wide variety of activities. Students with special educational needs are fully involved in all aspects of learning. Assessment is in the early stages of development and is not yet used by teachers to tailor teaching to the needs of the students. An audit showing where opportunities to cover citizenship already exist within other subjects has not yet been completed, so that the effectiveness of provision across subjects is not yet fully known.
144. Leadership and management are good. Very good planning has resulted in a sound introduction of the subject and laid a solid foundation for the future. The subject leader monitors the quality of teaching and there are supportive schemes of work and resources. Teachers are free to use whatever methods they prefer but the objectives they must reach are very clearly stated.
145. Since the last inspection citizenship has been introduced as a new subject. Its introduction has been very well planned and it makes a very worthwhile contribution to the students' personal development. It is well placed to improve further.

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM**

In the inspection, 10 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.

### **Level 3 GCE AS level courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	100.0	80.1	75.0	23.7	52.5	29.9
Biology	5	60.0	65.2	0.0	11.1	18.0	20.6
Business studies	2	100.0	76.4	0.0	16.3	30.0	26.2
Chemistry	3	100.0	72.7	0.0	13.9	30.0	24.1
Communication studies	2	100.0	86.4	0.0	23.8	30.0	32.0
Economics	1	100.0	73.6	0.0	20.1	30.0	26.4
English/English language	2	100.0	82.9	50.0	17.5	45.0	28.7
General studies	12	66.7	73.9	16.7	17.8	22.5	25.7
Geography	1	0.0	74.3	0.0	19.8	0.0	26.5
History	1	100.0	80.7	0.0	19.5	20.0	28.6
Information technology	1	100.0	67.0	100.0	10.9	50.0	21.4
Mathematics	4	75.0	61.9	25.0	17.1	22.5	22.1
Music	1	100.0	86.5	0.0	21.4	30.0	30.7
Other social studies	6	66.7	69.7	0.0	16.7	23.3	24.1
Physics	2	100.0	68.6	50.0	14.4	45.0	22.7
Religious studies	1	0.0	80.2	0.0	22.6	0.0	29.8
Sociology	6	100.0	71.8	33.3	18.4	40.0	25.4
Spanish	1	100.0	78.5	0.0	17.7	30.0	27.3
Sports/PE studies	1	100.0	73.2	0.0	11.4	30.0	23.1
Total	56	80.4	73.9	19.6	17.4	28.9	25.7

### **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	18	100.0	98.6	50.0	50.2	90.0	87.5
Biology	15	93.3	96.4	26.7	39.2	69.3	78.6
Business studies	7	100.0	98.7	14.3	36.8	65.7	80.1
Chemistry	6	100.0	97.6	66.7	49.0	86.7	84.9
Communication studies	6	100.0	99.4	33.3	37.8	90.0	82.1
Drama	5	100.0	99.5	20.0	40.1	64.0	83.6
Economics	1	100.0	98.9	0.0	52.0	80.0	88.3
English/English language	7	100.0	99.4	28.6	36.3	74.3	80.9
English literature	6	100.0	99.5	33.3	46.5	80.0	86.5

General studies	41	97.6	94.7	29.3	31.0	75.1	73.1
Geography	8	100.0	98.7	12.5	44.5	70.0	84.0
History	3	100.0	99.0	33.3	44.6	86.7	84.6
Home economics	2	100.0	98.1	0.0	34.6	50.0	76.6
Mathematics	9	88.9	96.7	22.2	55.6	64.4	88.8
Other languages	3	100.0	96.9	33.3	64.5	80.0	93.8
Other social studies	20	100.0	97.4	55.0	42.7	89.0	81.8
Physics	6	100.0	96.7	16.7	44.6	63.3	81.7
Religious studies	2	100.0	98.8	50.0	46.7	100.0	85.6
Sociology	19	100.0	98.2	47.4	44.3	86.3	83.6
Spanish	2	100.0	98.3	0.0	50.2	70.0	86.9
Sports/PE studies	4	100.0	98.0	50.0	30.9	85.0	75.2
Total	190	98.4	97.7	34.7	42.1	78.3	81.9
VCE Business	20	100.0	65.0	50.0	14.6	89.0	60.1
VCE Health and social care	12	100.0	67.7	25.0	14.5	80.0	63.5
VCE Information technology VQ	4	100.0	77.9	100.0	23.4	105.0	64.9
Total	36	100.0	n/a	47.2	n/a	87.8	85.5

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### ENGLISH

The inspection focus was on English language. Provision for English literature was sampled and found to be very good. Two English language lessons were seen and teaching, learning and achievement were good; results in English language in 2003 were average but those in 2004 were vastly improved.

#### English language

Provision in English language is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good and students achieve well.
- Relationships with students are very good and there is a good working ethos.
- The subject is popular and the numbers taking AS and A-level examinations increased in 2004.
- Teachers do not give enough support to students during drafting; they do not mark this work sufficiently to indicate how students' writing might improve.

#### Commentary

146. Standards are average and achievement is good. Sometimes achievement is very good. No national comparative data for the 2004 A-level results is yet available, but there was a significant improvement in the proportion of students who attained the higher A and B



grades. More female students take the examination than male and their results are usually better than those of male students. Results at AS-level in 2003, for two students, were similar to the A-level results. Work seen in one lesson, in which students investigated young children's early acquisition of language, indicated that standards of personal research were well above average. This strengthens students' security of knowledge in the subject and gives them good opportunities to develop their oral presentation skills, as they report to other students the results of their research.

147. Teaching and learning are good. Sometimes teaching is very good; as a result, overall students achieve very well and standards are improving on the immediate past. Teaching engages students, who work very well and persevere with difficult tasks, whether it is analysing the structures of language or tracing changes in language over the centuries. When considering the relationship of language to power or the abuse of power, for example in racist situations in parts of America, this perseverance with the difficult analyses of pieces of text pays dividends. Students are very adept at deconstructing the elements of language to highlight the implicit and explicit racism found in it. The quality of this reflects the scholarship teachers bring to sixth form teaching. Teachers make demands of students and set students sights high. The enthusiasm they bring to English study is 'caught' by the students; teachers present themselves as learners too; as a result, relationships are good in a climate of mutual endeavour. The marking of coursework is helpful and effective in indicating how students can improve their work; this process is not always applied early enough in the drafting processes in order to keep students well focused on the quality of their writing. Learning objectives are always clear and checked frequently as lessons proceed. Homework is purposeful and extends and enhances students' learning. When necessary, teachers match work to learning needs, helping less confident students with frameworks for their study. Around half of the students taking this subject are from minority ethnic backgrounds; their work and attainment match and sometimes exceed those of their fellow students.
148. The leadership of the subject is very good and the management is good. This has led to a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers plan together and are beginning to observe each other more frequently and to learn from the good practice of each other. There is a clear sense of vision and purpose and priorities for further improvement are clearly focused. There is a good sense of teamwork within the department.

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

149. Standards of literacy are generally average and can inhibit learning in some subjects, amongst many students other than the highest attainers. Overall, however, students cope well with the language demands of subjects. They talk regularly to teachers and each other in lessons and work well in small groups. They mostly understand what they read. The literacy skills of female students are generally better than those of males; they are quicker readers, for example. Spelling is often a weakness, although students write well when imagination is needed. Students from minority ethnic groups sometimes have difficulty with scientific terms in psychology and sociology.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Overall provision is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The numbers taking languages in the sixth form are very low.
- Examination results are good.
- Students have very good relationships with teachers.
- Lessons are examination-focused and well matched to the needs of individuals.

## Commentary

150. The numbers taking languages in the sixth form are very small and comparisons with national statistics are therefore not valid. Results in recent years have been good, however. In 2004 all students in German and Spanish gained A-level grades A or B, and in French all gained grade C or above.

151. Students' achievement is good. Classes are very small and teachers know their students very well and plan lessons to match their individual needs. Students are not unduly reliant on teachers. For example, they take responsibility for their own learning and organise themselves so that their progress over time is also good.

152. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and relationships in the classroom are good. Students cover a good balance of the skills required for the AS examinations. Students and teachers use the foreign language extensively in lessons. Students have opportunities to consider social and moral issues such as immigration and racism, the use of nuclear energy and atmospheric pollution, as well as to extend their cultural knowledge and understanding of the countries whose languages they are studying. Teachers' marking is detailed and relates well to the demands of the examinations, showing students what they need to do to improve. Students know how well they are doing and what to do to meet their own 'targets'.

153. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Schemes of work are clear and there is a range of resources to support learning. Students' examination performance is analysed in detail and action taken to improve performance. A recent change of awarding body (examination board), for example, now allows students to spend more time on areas which motivate them and to 'play to their strengths'.

154. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching has adapted well to the changed demands of the A-level course, although numbers remain very low.

## MATHEMATICS

The main focus of the inspection was AS and A-level mathematics. Further mathematics is also offered, but as there was only one student in Year 13 this was not sampled.

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement are unsatisfactory.
- Students starting the course do not have a secure breadth of knowledge on which to build.
- Too many students start the AS course in Year 12 and leave with no qualification, needing to repeat Year 12 or to re-sit examinations.

- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

155. A-level examination results in 2003 were well below the national average. AS results cannot be measured against national statistics as some students delay their final examination until Year 13, while others choose not to take the final module examination and drop the course. Too many students leave the course without any qualification or find it necessary to retake the whole year again. Those who stay on into Year 13 do not all reach their target grade based on GCSE results and too many have to re-sit modules. A small number of students exceed expectations, often due to additional support and one-to-one lessons from some very committed teachers.
156. Standards on entry to Year 12 are below average because no one who wishes to attempt the course is disallowed. In the small amount of work covered since the course started students have made insufficient progress overall, although this varies in different groups and topics. Students' standards in basic algebra are too low and they do not know some of the essential basic principles needed to make progress in the course units. Standards in Year 13 are below those expected for students at this stage, with almost all students needing to retake examinations in at least one course component. Achievement over the two years is unsatisfactory although it is better in Year 13 than Year 12.
157. Most teachers plan well and have a good relationship with their students. In the most effective lessons, teachers interact well with the students, assessing their understanding, making them think and moving them on at a good pace. Where teaching is least effective teachers are not able to react quickly enough to students' responses and to use them to move learning on; work is not sufficiently challenging for those with higher attainment and teachers lack subject-specific expertise. In these lessons, too often higher attaining students sit waiting for others to complete tasks before the teacher gives them more work at a higher level.
158. In order to improve both provision and standards, more teachers are now involved in delivering the course although their ability and the ability of long-standing teachers to improve standards have not been effectively monitored. Although test results are recorded, not enough has been done to ensure that students' progress in learning is carefully tracked and that they stay on target for their optimum grade in each module. The course is not popular with students and in a large sixth form the numbers opting to take it and succeeding in gaining an acceptable grade at AS and A-level are unusually low. Since the previous inspection standards have fallen and improvement is unsatisfactory.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

159. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory and used appropriately to support learning in other subjects. As yet links between subject needs and specific numeracy development have not been developed across the school.

## SCIENCE

The focus was on biology and chemistry but physics was also sampled. Two part lessons were observed in physics. Both were taught **very well** by experienced teachers and the students made **very good** progress, responding very well to the challenging tasks.

## Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in both years.
- Good teaching and the very positive attitudes of students enable them to achieve well and make good progress.
- The subject is well led and managed. Teachers are deployed most effectively.
- Assessment is very good. Students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support learning and teaching.

### Commentary

160. The GCE A-level results in biology in 2003 were well above the national average for boys and below average for girls. In 2004 the results were better overall than those of 2003, particularly for the proportion gaining grades A or B. In both years almost all candidates achieved at least well or very well in relation to their attainment in GCSE examinations.
161. The standards of the work observed are above average in each of Years 12 and 13 and students are making good progress. Achievement is also good in both years with almost all students achieving standards in line with, or better than, their performances at GCSE level. Year 13 students have a secure understanding of light-dependent reactions and in a lesson observed quickly grasped the processes occurring in the Calvin cycle. During the first month, Year 12 students have gained much knowledge and understanding of carbohydrates and lipids. They competently write structural formulae and describe the behaviour of functional groups in these compounds.
162. Teaching and learning are consistently good. The high quality of the relationships based on genuine mutual respect between teachers and students together with the very positive attitudes of students are major factors in helping students learn well in lessons and make good progress. Students respond well to the high expectations and challenge set by teachers. Lessons are very well planned and delivered in a lively, enthusiastic way. Questioning is skilful and well focused on individuals. Students are managed very well and all are kept busy throughout. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and make it comprehensible by skilful exposition. Students' examination technique develops well because teachers are well aware of examination board requirements. Marking is a particular strength. Students appreciate the detailed comments made, often indicating what steps they should take to improve. They express gratitude for the extra help willingly given by teachers out of lessons. Students show a high commitment to their studies and, in the main, enjoy their work. They co-operate well when working in groups. Their views about the subject are extremely positive.
163. The subject is well led and managed. The teachers are well qualified and are deployed effectively. Monitoring of performance is taking place. The newly qualified teachers are receiving very good support.

164. Assessment procedures are very thorough and students are regularly informed as to how they are progressing. Technical support is of a high quality. A lack of ICT resources within laboratories is restricting opportunities for using ICT as an aid to learning and teaching. One laboratory is small and in need of refurbishment or renewal.
165. Since the last inspection more resources have been provided and students have easy access to central ICT resources. Assessment procedures are also better.

## **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average.
- Students achieve well and make good progress because of their very positive attitudes and good teaching.
- The subject is well led and managed. Teachers are deployed effectively.
- Assessment is very good. Students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support learning and teaching.

### **Commentary**

166. The GCE results in 2002 and 2003 were above national averages. In 2004 all candidates gained a pass grade but the proportion gaining A or B grades was not as high as in 2003. The results were in line with recent national averages.
167. The standards of work seen are above average. The vast majority of students are making good progress and achieving well in relation to their prior attainment in GCSE examinations. In a practical lesson Year 13 students co-operated well with each other, working safely and carefully when identifying compounds. Year 12 students competently write electronic structures of elements and apply their knowledge well when predicting properties. Practical skills developed well when they carried out a titration.
168. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and make it comprehensible in a lively and informative manner. They also have a very good knowledge of examination board requirements and students rapidly acquire techniques required for success in examinations. Effective use is made of previous examination questions throughout the course. Teachers know the students extremely well and relationships are based on genuine mutual respect. This promotes confidence and eagerness to fulfil teachers' expectations. Lessons are very well planned and conducted at an appropriate pace. Questioning is skilful and teachers check understanding and draw out information very well. Students appreciate the frequent marking and informative comments on their work which help them to move forward. They also value the time readily given by teachers out of lessons to help them.
169. Leadership and management are good. Well-qualified teachers are deployed effectively. Students learn well mainly as a result of their very positive attitudes and the good teaching. Interest and concentration levels are always high. The students willingly respond and put forward ideas. Teachers' performance is monitored and they have opportunities

to share good practice by observing the classroom practice of colleagues. The newly qualified teachers are receiving very good support. Assessment procedures are accurate and comprehensive and students are kept well informed of their progress. The technician provides very good support. There is not enough ICT equipment within the laboratories. Consequently the use of ICT as an aid to teaching and learning is limited. One laboratory is particularly small and in need of much refurbishment or replacement.

170. Assessment procedures are now better and more resources have been provided since the last inspection. Students have much better access to ICT facilities out of lessons.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the provision in ICT in the sixth form is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teachers' subject knowledge is very good and ensures students are moved on at an appropriate rate and depth.
- The range of courses offered is wide and suits students' aspirations.
- Students' achievement is very good as most of them have a low knowledge base at the start of Year 12.
- Students have very good attitudes to ICT and they make very good efforts to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Performance data is available, but is under-used for detailed examination analysis.
- Much of the accommodation is cramped and students have inadequate areas for theory work.

### **Commentary**

171. The range of ICT courses offered to sixth form students is wide and matches students' needs. Students can take AS and A-level, foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses, a CISCO network-training course, AVCE or basic key skills courses. Although there is a good range of courses on offer, far fewer girls than boys opt to take ICT at present.

172. All students who took either VCE or A2-level examinations in 2004 gained A or B grades, which is well above the national average. All the students were boys. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good and students' attitudes are very good, which brings about very good learning. Students' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they begin in the sixth form is very good. On entry, standards are generally low, as most students did not take GCSE and had few skills in the subject other than word processing. Students have to work extremely hard at the start of their courses to bring their knowledge up to date before they can make progress on the examination courses. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average overall. Students have extensive knowledge of computers, software, applications, systems and the effect which technology has on society. They research well and use sound logic when selecting suitable programs to use for presenting arguments and evaluating the success of their projects. Students' skills in explaining their thinking are better developed in Year 13 than in Year 12 as the older ones are more aware of the social and moral implications of using ICT in society. Although practical skills are at a high level a few of the less confident students occasionally have difficulty with theory on highly technical aspects. The few girls on the

courses tend to work more slowly than the boys, but tend to be more methodical in approach. Standards of work from students doing the very demanding CISCO course are above average. Students have a good grasp of what constitutes a network and understand about creating, managing and maintaining systems in a variety of organisations. They know the basics about network security implications and how to check individual files. Portfolio work is generally good. Students keep their files organised, with well-annotated printouts and notes, but a few do the basic minimum and their record keeping is haphazard.

173. The overall quality of teaching is very good and brings about very good learning. Teachers are highly skilled and know the subject and the requirements of the examining boards thoroughly. This ensures that students have opportunities to gain information and understanding of what is required on an advanced course of study. Students' capabilities are well understood by the teachers who give them motivational and challenging projects with scope for personal choice and development. Relationships are very positive and target setting is realistic. Teachers expect students to do their best and give them appropriate support and guidance so that they can fulfil their potential. Assessment is very thorough, but the analysis of data could be better organised and utilised. Students appreciate help and act upon advice, thus raising the standards of their work. At the end of sessions, time for evaluation is well used as it ensures that the students develop questioning ability and confidence in judgement.

174. Leadership and management are very good. The teachers have clear roles and responsibilities for different aspects of the courses and meet regularly to plan together and discuss work. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. More courses have been developed and extended, more students take the subject, and most of them complete the courses. Results are now well above the national average and there are more and better computers. The accommodation is cramped and there is little space for theory work in the ICT rooms, which are uninspiring environments.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

The overall provision in geography is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables students to achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and management raise standards and widen the appeal of the subject.
- Fieldwork makes a positive contribution to students' learning.
- Examination results, particularly the proportion at the higher grades, are below the national average.

#### Commentary

175. In the advanced level examination in 2003, results for the very small number of students were below the national average. This pattern was repeated in 2004, when there were no passes at grades A or B.

176. Standards of work seen during the inspection show that students in the current Year 12 are working at below average levels. The department welcomes students with a wide range of prior attainment and a much larger group than in previous years is in the early stages of the course. These students are already achieving very well because teaching and learning are very good. In Year 13, standards of work are in line with national expectations. Most students are now working at, or just above, the level predicted for them at the beginning of the course. They are very well motivated in lessons and their very good relationships with their teachers are helping them to achieve very well.
177. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to show students how to adapt and develop their learning in preparation for examinations. From the beginning of the course there is a strong focus on helping students to work independently and wide reading and research on topical issues are encouraged, thus building up their knowledge. Lessons are very well planned to incorporate a range of activities, which demand students' active participation and develop their confidence in presenting ideas and information. One excellent lesson was seen in which the teacher's imaginative use of ICT, very high expectations and excellent focus on independent and collaborative enquiry enabled all students to make very rapid progress in their understanding of the complexities of global warming.
178. Discussion with students in both years shows that they appreciate the quality of the support which they receive from their teachers. Their work is marked regularly, often with helpful comments and marks related to examination grades. Year 13 students spoke highly of the benefit of review days, when their progress is discussed in more detail. Students therefore know the levels at which they are working and what they need to do in order to improve.
179. The leadership of geography and the day-to-day management of the subject are very good. The head of department has very clear strategies for improving standards and geography is an increasingly popular option. A significant recent development has been the planning and introduction of new fieldwork activities. These widen students' understanding of urban and rural environments beyond their local area and inject a great deal of enjoyment into learning. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

## **Religious studies**

Religious studies was sampled at post-16.

180. The lack of provision of religious education for all students at this key stage identified in the previous inspection has been addressed and some progress made in meeting the statutory requirement. The positive profile of the subject at A-level mentioned in that inspection has been both maintained and developed, the subject now being in a phase of significant growth.
181. The attainment of students at A-level has strengthened in recent years. From a performance below the national average in 2002, in the most recent examination, 80 per cent achieved a pass in the range A-C, this being considerably above the national average. 100 per cent achieved a grade in the A-E range.



182. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. Teaching is challenging and demanding of reading and research. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of the subject and create a most positive learning environment. The development of the GCSE half course at Key Stage 4 has proved to be an important strategy for A-level subject recruitment. Numbers choosing religious studies have grown strongly since the previous inspection.
183. The decision to address the matter of the statutory provision of a general course of religious education for all students through both the general studies and tutorial courses is sound. However, the planning of provision is currently insecure and further work needs to be undertaken to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. The involvement of subject specialists teaching in the sixth form in the planning and delivery of teaching is under active consideration and should be secured.

## **Sociology**

Sociology was sampled at post-16.

184. The teaching and learning are very good. The leadership and management of sociology are very good. Students learn about a range of issues relating to society and the maintenance of good order. Students are made aware of the societal norms as they relate to individuals and communities. Progress is very good. There is considerable value added. All students express their personal opinions openly, use their research and reflect on viewpoints contrary to their own. Achievement and attainment, overall, are above average. Students show a good breadth of sociological knowledge and can demonstrate connections between substantive topics, sociological thought and research methods. The higher attaining students convey conceptual detail, and knowledge that is both theoretical and empirical. The best work shows a clear, full and complex understanding of the material offered.

## **Psychology**

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching by a specialist teacher engages with students and is raising standards.
- Clear schemes of work aid progress.
- Students enjoy their studies and attend well.
- Concise assessment clarifies standards and informs students of their achievement level.
- Access to electronic research is limited in classrooms.

## **Commentary**

185. Students entering Year 12 and taking psychology are faced with a new subject. They commence their work with differing levels of GCSE performance. Standards on entry to Year 12 are average. At the start of Year 13 standards are moving to above average. Female students, who are the majority, achieve higher performance standards but not significantly so. Female students' work is more organised than that of male students. As a result of very good teaching and hard work on the part of students, examination results at the end of Years 12 and 13 are above national expectations. Progress is very good over the two years of study. Retention rates are high.

186. AS and A2 examination results over three years have been above those gained in similar centres. Achievement is very good overall. Females gain higher grades than males. There are more females studying psychology than males. Recent results show improvement for all students across a wider range of ability. Psychology is well established in the sixth form and its popularity is on the rise. Students, on entering Year 12, are taught to think like scientists and to use appropriate psychological terminology in their writing. The higher attaining students work hard and become confident learners. The middle/lower attaining students find problems with the writing of reports. They receive good support with this necessary skill. Students are assisted with primary and secondary research methods to develop their understanding of the changing nature of psychology.
187. Teaching and learning are very good. Very good teaching and some that was excellent were observed. The teacher knows a good range of psychology. The presentation of complex medical research into human behaviour is clear. A good range of teaching methods is used and these are imaginative and encouraging. In each lesson there is concentration and involvement by students but there is often a problem concerning the independence of students' learning. With the exception of the higher attaining students, significant numbers of students are content to be passive receivers of quality handouts. More use of electronic sources would overcome this passive stance by requiring greater individual effort to secure primary information. The teacher is doing more than is necessary to inform students of relevant research. The assessment of students' writing is accurate. The comments on their work are clear and inform students of their progress.
188. Learning is very good. Most students are able to elaborate and develop psychological theory and methods by means of example and citation. Higher attaining students clearly analyse the methods and theory of psychology. The lower attaining students have a measured ability to communicate relevant information. There are, however, problems with their organisation of arguments to form a logical and flowing thesis.
189. Leadership and management are very good. High standards are set and support is provided to make them achievable. The performance of students is monitored carefully. Targets are set and although they are not always achieved they are successful as benchmarks of what is required to succeed. The teaching of psychology is making progress over time. The subject leader ensures that lessons are effective and that good learning takes place. Students get regular and effective feedback and they know what is their present level of attainment. Psychology was not seen during the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Textiles**

Provision in textiles is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are in line with the national average because teaching is very good.
- The subject leader has a clear vision and leads a well-coordinated team.
- Assessment is very good and geared to raising standards.
- The learning environment stimulates creativity and demonstrates quality products.
- Achievement is very good across the full range of ability.

## Commentary

190. In each of the last two years all students have been successful at the end of the Year 12 GCE AS-level and Year 13 GCE A2-level courses. In 2003, the students achieved well in relation to their ability profile, but their grades were below the national average. In 2004 grades were in line with the national average and more students gained higher grades. Students grow in confidence and develop very good skills and knowledge over the courses. These qualities enable students to achieve very well in relation to their ability.
191. The quality of teaching is very good. The subject leader has a clear vision and sense of direction for the subject. She co-ordinates a very good team of teachers who have high quality skills and subject knowledge. Expectations of students are high, and frequent monitoring, review and assessment of learning ensure that all students are able to make very good progress in line with their abilities. Students have very good attitudes to their work in the subject. They are prepared and encouraged to take risks in developing original design ideas. They support and challenge one another in lessons and in using the facilities outside the formal timetable time. Students are very well supported throughout the courses, but this is especially good at the start of Year 12, when students are making the transition from GCSE to A-level standard work. The use of review, exemplar materials and clear subject-specific progression targets, enables students to successfully overcome initial uncertainties.
192. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The subject leader has wide experience and brings expertise, adventure and excitement to the subject. Roles are clear and expectations of staff and students are very high. The management approach is developmental and the shared teaching of groups, in shared facilities, enables students and staff to grow in subject knowledge and skills. There are good systems for self-evaluation and monitoring outcomes. Lessons learned lead to changes where appropriate in teaching and learning practices. The standard of accommodation is unsatisfactory and has a negative impact on standards of attainment.

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

### **Art and design**

Overall the quality of provision in art is **very good**.

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

- Standards are below average in the higher grades of GCE A-level but achievement is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The attitude of the students is excellent: they work hard, and enjoy very good professional relationships with their teachers.
- Good management of the subject provides clear vision and the promotion of high standards.
- The use of computers in art is very limited, restricting the quality of research and the opportunity for students to develop additional creative skills.

#### **Commentary**

193. Standards in 2003 were below average in the higher grades of GCE A-level. However, all students entered gained a pass and art students performed better than in any of their other subjects. Students work hard, often working outside their set timetable. A majority of the students have developed confidence when working with a variety of materials and resources. They are articulate and can discuss their work with confidence and have pride in their achievements. Achievement is very good because of the opportunities on offer combined with very good support from teachers. Their work, research and personal studies demonstrate good development of craft skills and an increased awareness of art and artists. An analysis of work during the inspection indicates that standards are rising.

194. Teaching is very good. Lessons are challenging and well planned. Classroom organisation and management are extremely effective and the professional relationship between the teachers and the students is often excellent. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and other cultures in order raise creative and visual appreciation and develop critical thinking skills. The displays of work in the public areas are impressive. Assessment is effective; students are aware of expectations and know how to improve. Work is reviewed on a regular basis and assessment is used effectively as an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. The students are well aware of teachers' expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Students speak highly of the support provided by their teachers.

195. The quality of leadership and management is good. There is clear vision and effective planning which promotes high standards in lessons. The teachers work as a very effective team offering complementary skills. The quality of teaching is monitored. Teachers maintain detailed records and targets are set for achievement. There is very limited space for the students to safely store their work. Opportunities for students to use computers in art are limited because of a general lack of ICT resources.

### **Music**

Music was sampled at post-16.

196. Provision for music in the sixth form is **very good**. Standards and achievement both improve throughout the two years, although the overall level for each of the students is accurately reflected by his or her instrumental skills, enthusiasm and presentation of work. Teaching and learning are always good or very good, aided by very good relationships between the teachers and students. This results in good dialogue, for example when discussing analysis or using composing software. Students make good use of the musical opportunities available in the school and serve as good role models to the younger students, with whom they work and share well. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a very clear vision of future developments and very effective planning ensures that music is a dynamic and exciting subject.

## Theatre studies

Provision for theatre studies is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and sometimes very good teaching results in very effective learning and achievement.
- Students are committed to success and set themselves high standards.
- Scholarship is strong in A-level teaching.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and lessens the enrichment teachers can bring to drama.

### Commentary

197. Theatre studies is a successful subject. The numbers taking it have been disappointing, but in the current Year 12 group the numbers are much higher and at a level to be expected given the success of drama in Years 10 and 11. More female than male students choose to take the subject in the sixth form. The demands of the course are appropriate. Standards seen during the inspection have been average. In recent years every student has passed the A-level examination. In 2003, the proportion gaining the higher A and B grades was well below the national average; in 2004, the proportion was lower. In both instances, because of the small number of students taking the examination, valid comparisons with national data are difficult to make.

198. Teaching seen is good. On occasions it is very good. This is because it is secure and makes challenging demands of students. For example, Year 12 students were helped to identify the sub-text in a difficult extract from Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. Good teaching helped students to delve into Strindberg's purposes in this play. Students in both year groups wrestled with the demands and conventions of making theatre physical whilst exploring complex themes. The interaction between the teacher and the students in these lessons was quiet and subtle, but the resulting work was that of the students' independent and group efforts. The teacher knew when to intervene to challenge and when to give responsibility to the students. The quality of the learning in drama is very good.

199. The department builds well on GCSE successes in its sixth form provision. Numbers show signs of improving and the lead teacher at A-level is effective. The work of the department is hampered, however, by the lack of a decent drama studio space. Management of the available resources, however, is very good. There has been satisfactory development and improvement since the previous inspection.



## 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>2</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>4</b>
Students' achievement	3	3
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>		<b>3</b>
Attendance	3	4
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	2	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2	2
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	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	3

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

