

INSPECTION REPORT

BEBINGTON HIGH SPORTS COLLEGE

Bebington

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105106

Headteacher: Mr B Jordan

Lead inspector: Terence Parish

Dates of inspection: 18 – 21 October 2004

Inspection number: 268745

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 – 18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1074

School address: Higher Bebington Road
Bebington
Wirral
Postcode: CH63 2PS

Telephone number: 0151 6454154
Fax number: 0151 6438065

Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Clark

Date of previous inspection: 12 October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school has about the same number of pupils as other secondary schools. There is a small sixth form; the local education authority is currently engaged in a review of local sixth form provision. The school attained specialist Sports College status in 2001. Staffing arrangements and new-build developments meant that initial targets were difficult to meet but more recently the school has made further developments and is in the process of applying for second phase specialist status. There is a whole-school ethos for sport, and specialist status has brought improvements in both sporting and overall provision. Overall, pupils are below average socio-economically and attainment on entry is below average. Most pupils stay at the school for a full five years. Almost all pupils are white; a few come from a range of ethnic minority groups that changes from year to year. Very few are likely not to use English as the first language at home. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of special educational need, is broadly in line with the national average. Most have general learning difficulties; there is a range of behavioural, social, emotional and physical needs. The school has recently come through a traumatic 'new build' which has certainly taken up far too much school management time and likely affected standards in recent years. Problems with buildings remain.

The school has been part of the Excellence in Cities initiative and is currently in the second year of Leadership Improvement Grant developments.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15465	T Parish	Lead inspector	
8992	J P Vischer	Lay inspector	
7926	J E Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
10209	V J P Gormally	Team inspector	Art and design
12890	T Jardine	Team inspector	Science Biology
10782	H Moreton	Team inspector	Business education
31850	D Nevens	Team inspector	Citizenship Music
17404	J Y Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8873	C Evers	Team inspector	History
20497	V Williams	Team inspector	Geography
17923	M Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics
21806	P A Swinnerton	Team inspector	Health and social care
15485	R Butler	Team inspector	Religious education
32169	G R O'Hagan	Team inspector	Sociology
7958	G Lewis	Team inspector	English
24894	C Petts	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet *'Complaining about Ofsted Inspections'*, which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	11
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	17
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	26
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	29
Work related learning	
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	56

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The main school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Teaching and learning are good, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, and the new headteacher has already inspired all involved with the school. However, examination standards are too low, and there are weaknesses in the curriculum and assessment arrangements. The school is most likely to show rapid improvement in these areas. Pupils are currently achieving broadly satisfactorily and making good progress in lessons although standards of work and basic skills, such as numeracy, are below average overall. Almost all senior managers are new and leadership and management are currently satisfactory. Because of weaknesses outlined above the school does not give satisfactory value for money. The sixth form is poor and is not cost effective. This is not a reflection on students; they have very good attitudes and are very supportive of the school. The sixth form summary follows this school summary.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations of the headteacher are very good and already well recognised by pupils, staff, and also parents, who are very interested in the education their children get.
- Standards in end of Year 9 test results have risen in recent years and are above average in English but GCSE results have not kept pace with them and are too low overall and in most subjects.
- In Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve excellently in art and design and well in English, physical education and music but there is unsatisfactory achievement in design and technology, geography, Information and communication technology and religious education, although achievement in the last two is now set to rise.
- Pupils are well able to distinguish right from wrong and, overall, respect the school community they are part of.
- There is a good spread of very good or better teaching across subjects meaning teachers have easy access to best practice to help them improve.
- Effective school-wide assessment arrangements are undeveloped and, for example, it is not possible to deduce whether the most able pupils are achieving high enough standards in most subjects.
- The requirements to provide religious education and ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not met, the range of vocational courses offered in is too small and off site provision is not well enough monitored.
- Pastoral care, welfare and support are good and the learning mentor provision is very good.
- Sports College status has spurred improving teaching, learning and overall provision in physical education and fostered improved attitudes across the school. The school's role as the hub of area sports links has forged very good links with those schools involved.
- Too many students achieve too little in the sixth form and many aspects of provision in the sixth form are unsatisfactory.

Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards at GCSE have declined. More areas of the school fail to meet national requirements. The sixth form has deteriorated. Substantial rebuilding has improved accommodation although significant problems remain and much still needs doing to support best practice and innovations in the curriculum.

In accordance with schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that the school has an inadequate sixth form because it has significant weaknesses in students' achievement, completion rates for courses, the curriculum, guidance and support, leadership and management, and cost effectiveness.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average. E very low, in the bottom 5 % of national results*

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11, although standards in recent GCSE examinations have not been high enough. Students' achievement in the sixth form is overall unsatisfactory as too many drop out of courses or fail to attain a grade. Standards compared to national standards are overall below average in all years. End of Year 9 test results have risen significantly over the last two years and English results are now above average. GCSE examination results rose significantly in 2004 but, overall, pupils achieved little better than in 2003. Statutory targets were not met and were also set too low. Pupils in art and design produce work that is of well above average standard and their achievement is excellent in Years 7 to 11. Pupils achieve well in English and in physical education in Years 7 to 11, and in music in Years 7 to 9. They achieve satisfactorily overall in many other subjects, including mathematics and science. They achieve unsatisfactorily in geography and in religious education in all years, in ICT and in design and technology in Years 7 to 9. Many pupils also underachieve in ICT and in Years 10 and 11 as curriculum provision is unsatisfactory. Achievement in ICT and in religious education is set to improve as new leadership and management takes effect. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in their 'base' or with specialist support elsewhere, satisfactorily otherwise.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. **The provision for their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.** Attendance is satisfactory whilst punctuality is good. Students' attitudes in the sixth form are very good and their behaviour is exemplary.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are both good overall. They are good in Years 7 to 11, and satisfactory in the sixth form. Assessment used in the classroom and of pupils' work is satisfactory overall in all years. Teaching and learning overall are excellent in art and design; good in English, science, physical education, ICT, history, music and religious education, and satisfactory in all other subjects.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory; care, guidance and support are all satisfactory; the partnership with parents is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 11, links with other educational providers are good and links with the wider community are satisfactory; in the sixth form, links with other providers are satisfactory for current students, links with the community are unsatisfactory and time which could be better utilised by some students is wasted.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall in the main school, and unsatisfactory in the sixth form. The headteacher and almost all senior managers are new to their jobs. As defined in the inspection framework, leadership by the headteacher and other key staff is satisfactory and management is satisfactory. However, the new headteacher has a very clear sense of purpose and very high aspirations for the school and his presence is already well appreciated by

pupils, parents and staff. There have also been new appointments to governors but at present governance is unsatisfactory; statutory requirements are not met; the school needs challenging to reach higher examination standards and finances need better direction and monitoring.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Seven hundred parents responded to the parents' questionnaire. Many responses were positive but there was very significant concern about pupils' behaviour and about the apparent difficulty of talking to the school or getting a response from it. Inspectors found behaviour to be good and the new headteacher and senior management have 'open doors'. All anecdotal evidence received from parents, pupils and others suggest that, at least at this time, parents' concerns have been addressed. The school polled its pupils and their opinions were mixed but mainly positive, especially for younger pupils. Pupils and students talked to on the inspection were all very positive and they appreciated the headteacher being 'everywhere'.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in examinations at the end of Years 11, 12 and 13 by improving assessment and academic target setting and monitoring, modifying the curriculum so it better meets the needs of all pupils and students', bringing more teaching into the 'very good' category, and improving pupils and students basic skills, such as ICT and their capacity for independent study.
- Ensure achievement in all subjects is at least satisfactory by addressing points made in subject reports.
- Improve advice and guidance to sixth form students so that they are directed to appropriate courses in which they are likely to succeed, whether the courses are at this school or elsewhere.
- Improve leadership and management of the sixth form at all levels of management in the school and ensure staff and governors are well aware of what best practice in a modern sixth form is.
- Ensure courses provided off site are the correct choice for pupils and students and that pupils' and students' work is fully monitored by the school and action taken if underachievement is detected.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure statutory requirements for the ICT curriculum are met.
- Ensure statutory requirements for the religious education curriculum are met.
- Ensure the national requirement for a daily act of collective worship is met.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is poor and it gives poor value for money. Current students have very good attitudes, are taught satisfactorily and make satisfactory progress in lessons. Standards on entry to the sixth form range between well below and below average and standards in examinations are typically low. Some students struggle to learn at higher-level courses. Over time there is significant underachievement. Curricular provision does not meet the needs of students and the quality of support and guidance provided to them is inadequate. Leadership is unsatisfactory and management is poor. Both the school and the local education authority recognise that sixth form provision has to improve and local plans to tackle problems are underway.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in examinations are very low and there is significant underachievement.
- Advice, guidance and support for students are unsatisfactory.
- The curriculum provision is poor and does not adequately meet students' needs.
- Students' attitudes are very good and their behaviour excellent.
- Leadership is unsatisfactory and management poor.

In accordance with schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that the school has an inadequate sixth form because it has significant weaknesses in students' achievement, completion rates for courses, the curriculum, guidance and support, leadership and management, and cost effectiveness.

At the time of the previous inspection the sixth form was said to be expanding. However, numbers have recently fallen. During the inspection there were only nine students in Year 13. As a result, some teaching groups are very small and in some subjects Year 12 and Year 13 students are taught together. Standards are no better. Accommodation for the sixth form has significantly improved. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

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 in depth.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is satisfactory overall as teaching and learning are good and students make good progress in lessons. However, students typically do less well in examinations than they should because their achievement is held back by weak basic skills.
Science	Provision in biology is unsatisfactory . Standards are well below average. Though teaching and learning are satisfactory, recent examination results have been well below average and there has been significant underachievement.
Humanities	Provision in sociology is satisfactory . Teaching is satisfactory and students achieve as expected. Standards are below average. Frequent discussions and probing questioning engage students.
Business	Provision in business education is satisfactory . Standards are below average but examination results are broadly in line with students' abilities. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

	Achievement is satisfactory.
Health and social care	Provision in health and social care is satisfactory . The course meets the needs of the small number of students well. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and enable students to achieve satisfactorily.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students are given inadequate guidance and support. They are unable to make an informed choice of courses in the sixth form, and appropriate support in terms of key skills is not available. A large proportion of students take courses that are not appropriate in relation to their prior attainment. They find courses too difficult and there is significant underachievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership is unsatisfactory and management is poor. The curricular provision is not adequately evaluated. It does not meet the needs and aspirations of students and leads to significant underachievement. Monitoring and evaluation of overall provision are unsatisfactory. Financial management of the sixth form is inadequate and responsibilities for this are unclear.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

There was no sixth form questionnaire to refer to in order to establish students' views of sixth form provision. In conversation with sixth formers it is clear that they have positive views about provision made for them.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Terms used: the term 'capped' average point score describes the average total points pupils attain for their best eight GCSE subjects. The average point score relates to the average total points pupils attain for all their GCSE subjects. Value-added describes the amount of progress pupils or students make, for example between their results at the end of Year 9 and their GCSE results two years later. Statements about achievement can mean how well pupils did in examinations or how well they are doing now – are their standards of current work high enough when their starting points are considered? – If so, they achieve satisfactorily.

Standards compared to national standards are overall below average in all years. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but standards in recent GCSE examinations have not been high enough and pupils have not achieved well enough. Current progress in lessons is overall good. Students' achievement in the sixth form is overall unsatisfactory as too many drop out of courses or fail to attain a grade in examinations.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The trend in average test points in Year 9 has steadily risen since 2000 and risen more sharply since 2002. It is now above average in English but below average in mathematics and science.
- In Years 7 to 11, pupils achieve excellently in art and design and well in English and in physical education; they achieve well in music in Years 7 to 9.
- In Years 7 to 9, there is unsatisfactory achievement in design and technology, geography, ICT and religious education, though achievement in the last two is now set to rise.
- GCSE, A-level and AVCE results have been well below average for at least two years.
- Value-added measures indicate that pupils do not achieve satisfactorily by Year 11 but work seen during the inspection indicates that achievement now is satisfactory.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.2 (33.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	33.2 (31.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.3 (30.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 209 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. End of Year 9 national test results have gone up each year since 2000, and the trend has been slightly above that seen nationally. In 2003 in English, point scores rose above the national average for the first time. About three-quarters of pupils reached the expected level (Level 5) in English, but only about two-thirds reached the expected level in mathematics and science. In 2003, about 40 per cent of pupils reached Level 6 and above in English and mathematics, but less than a quarter attained the same in science. The school appears to set unreasonably low targets for English which it then exceeds and unreasonably high targets for science which it fails to meet. Present standards of work are below average overall. Data shows that boys achieve better than girls by the end of Year 9 which reflects the school's

unbalanced gender intake (the ratio of boys to girls is 3:2) rather than boys doing particularly well; local grammar schools and a local girls' school take a higher proportion of pupils deemed higher attainers at the end of Year 6, than this school. In work seen there is no significant difference between boys' and girls' overall achievement.

2. There are considerable differences in pupils' achievement across subjects in Years 7 to 9. In English, physical education and music, achievement is good and generally linked to strong leadership a good range of work and good, experienced staffing. Achievement in art and design is excellent and standards well above average; leadership and management are excellent too and have affected such standards through very good schemes of work and a team approach to monitoring. In contrast, achievement in design and technology, geography, ICT and religious education is unsatisfactory. This underachievement is linked to historical or existing weaknesses in the curricula offered or staffing issues or both. ICT and religious education are certainly showing signs of improving pupils' achievement under new leadership.
3. Across all years and in most subjects pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. They generally achieve well in relation to their targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs) and statements of special educational need. In English and science, pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Provisional 2004 GCSE examination results indicate that the majority of pupils with special educational needs achieved in line with their target grades. There are currently no pupils in the school who are at the early stages of English acquisition. Those for whom English is an additional language have acquired sufficient fluency in English to achieve at least as well as other pupils in the school.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	20 (32)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	79 (80)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	24.4 (26.9)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 209 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. GCSE results were particularly low in 2003 confirming a downward trend begun in 2001. However, raw results for 2004 indicate a rise to at least 2002 levels (average points 26.9) reversing this trend. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades is the worst performing benchmark and brings the overall comparison to well below national standards. The table above shows that results were poor in 2003 and these represent considerable underachievement if Year 9 test results in 2001 are considered. Neither did the school do well enough in the proportion of pupils attaining five or more A*-G grades which was also well below average. This figure can be mitigated a little by the pupils following an alternative curriculum which reduces the number of GCSEs they follow. Results in 2004 improved significantly but cannot be fully compared to national results which have yet to be validated. However, no statutory examination targets were met in 2004 and value added analysis shows pupils overall underachieved similarly to 2003. Two significant factors need to be taken into account when looking at recent results: there are far more boys than girls; girls nationally, and in this school, do better at GCSE than boys do; the national results above are based on

equal numbers of boys and girls and could arguably be reduced by five per cent for the proportion attaining five or more A*-C grades in subjects taken by a predominance of boys, but not for any other benchmarks. More significantly, the decline in results was in 2002-2003 which coincided with the reported mayhem caused by building; there is anecdotal evidence that this caused more problems with older pupils than younger and boys more than girls.

5. In 2003, only art and design shows above average results for the proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade; physical education is the next best subject but a little below average. In 2004, most subjects improved their GCSE results and comparisons can be made in the table below. A subject key to low overall examination figures is engineering. This is a dual award applied GCSE. In 2004, 48 pupils were entered; not only did none attain an A*-C grade, 20 were unclassified – received no grade. The fault for this can be laid at school management; the provider reports pupils were not chosen appropriately (still true now) and the school admits that pupils' work was not monitored well enough.
6. Standards of work seen during the inspection appear similar to or better than those indicated by 2004 GCSE results. Standards of work in English, music, physical education and citizenship are average compared to national standards; standards of work in art and design are well above average. Standards of work are well below average in geography, and below average in all other subjects. Pupils achieve well in English and in physical education, excellently in art and design, and unsatisfactorily in geography and religious education (due to an unsatisfactory curriculum). In all other subjects inspected pupils achieve satisfactorily. The reasons for different achievement in different subjects are similar to those cited for subjects in Years 7 to 9. There is some variance in teaching and learning in all years but no subject has unsatisfactory teaching.
7. GCSE results for 2003 for which national comparisons were available and 2004 results for which no national comparisons were available at the time of writing. Both sets of results are rounded to whole figures

	National 2003	School % A*-C 2003	No. of pupils	School % A*-C 2004	No. of pupils
English language	58	38	188	46	189
English literature	63	45	142	51	153
Mathematics	48	30	193	36	188
Science (double)	51	27	184	36	189
Art and design	65	78	37	78	32
ICT	55	28	25	14	51
Geography	58	25	32	26	23
History	60	29	89	37	65
Dance	65	100*	1	50	12
Design & technology	53	19	128	29	121
Engineering				0	48
Physical education	55	48	25	33	48
Spanish	48	27	127	Sp/Fr 41	111
Music				17	6
Sociology				20	10

**statistically irrelevant as only one entry*

8. Data shows that girls do better in examinations than boys which reflects the national picture and not the intake picture mentioned above. This means that girls achieve much better than boys by the end of Year 11 but inspectors did not see evidence of this in current work except in design and technology and ICT. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds do just as well as others in examinations, and in some cases, better. This was also seen, relative to achievement, in all subjects during the inspection.

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	62.8 (64.5)	85.5 (92.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	2.5 (3.2)	27.6 (33.8)
Average point score per pupil	93.8 (103.8)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 26 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

9. Standards in examinations are, overall, very low. The data does not indicate how many students left courses before they entered for examinations. This 'drop out' rate is typically around 25 per cent and few students have historically followed through from Year 12 to Year 13. Current numbers in the sixth form reflect this: 36 in Year 12, 11 in Year 13. Year 12 prior to summer 2004 was 26; 15 left before September to enter employment. (Numbers are based on different sets of data that were provided during the inspection and may not match references to sixth form numbers elsewhere in the report).
10. In 2003, nearly three-quarters of students were unclassified in one or more subjects at AS-level and that is why many presumably left (66 subject entries). At A-level only about three per cent were unclassified (29 subject entries), at AVCE about two-thirds (6 subject entries). This indicates that too many students were guided on to the wrong courses when they began Year 12 and/or their performance was not monitored sufficiently once on the courses. Conversely, those students who attained better and stuck the course in Year 13 were possibly more motivated and/or better mentored and so did relatively well. School self-evaluation does not say much about standards or achievement in the sixth form and completely misses the 'wastage'. Governors have been made aware of successes but not of the failures.
11. Only a representative sample of subjects were inspected. Work in hand ranges from below average to well below average compared to national standards. The Year 13 sample is small because of low student numbers. Year 12 is still in the early days of sixth form work. In lessons pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Many are starting with better GCSE results than their peers in past years and their attitudes are very good; consequently, eventual examination results may be better than those in recent years.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. The provision for their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory whilst punctuality is good. Students in the sixth form have good attendance, very good attitudes, and show exemplary behaviour.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school deals very effectively with any signs of harassment and pupils are effectively free from bullying in school.
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct and works to achieve them well.

- Pupils are well able to distinguish right from wrong and, overall, respect the school community they are part of.

Commentary

- Nearly all pupils spoken to were very positive about the school. The school's own pupil questionnaire analysis reveals that there are considerable differences of opinion across year groups and between boys and girls. Year 11 pupils are less positive than other years, as is found in many schools. Many Year 11 girls have concerns about how fairly they are treated but the opposite is the case with Year 7 girls. Overall attitudes are positive about the school and about lessons. In lessons where pupils are unclear about what to do, attitudes can deteriorate, for example in a Year 11 design and technology lesson where some pupils' desire to learn soon dissipated and led to immature behaviour. Pupils are particularly positive about the lack of bullying and other forms of harassment. In this mainly white school, ethnic minorities feel treated well.
- Pupils and students are very enthusiastic about the school's specialist sports status. Participation rates in sporting activities are very good, both competitive and recreational, and younger pupils, in particular, are proud to wear the new physical education department sports kit. The physical education department has developed the use of a 'Fair Play' approach to classroom behaviour and discipline, which is displayed in all teaching areas. The attitudes and behaviour of the great majority of pupils in the department are very good and pupils clearly respond to this approach. Other departments are now taking this approach on board.
- Pupils stress the importance of the new headteacher's clear line on good behaviour and smart appearance and say this has had a noticeable impact on improving behaviour through setting clear standards. They also cite the fact that there are many adults to turn to across the school including teachers, form tutors and learning mentors. If pupils feel aggrieved, their concerns are listened to and action is taken.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1035	162	4
White – Irish	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	6	1	0
Mixed – any other background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	10	3	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	2	0
Black or Black British – African	1	1	0
Chinese	5	0	0

Any other ethnic group	5	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	5	2	0

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

15. Pupils are excluded from time to time for unsatisfactory behaviour. Only one pupil was excluded at the time of the inspection. Over 12 months the level of permanent exclusions is about average but the level of temporary exclusions is slightly higher than average. The new headteacher is clear that temporary exclusions are used only when behaviour modification programmes have failed; it is very rare that behaviour has been so unacceptable that an instant exclusion is necessary. Heads of year operate the behaviour management system consistently and staff communicate well about ongoing cases. An internal exclusion base operates effectively, providing pupils with work for lessons they are not in, and allows staff to refer pupils before tension builds up unnecessarily in the classroom. Behaviour in the congested corridors is good. It is not tightly disciplined, for example pupils do not always adhere to the keep-left principle, but given the tightness of the space and the necessity in some places to wait in line while other pupils are marshalled through they are patient and well-behaved. In the broad and spacious outside areas, behaviour is good. Sixth form prefect corridor management of pupils at break and lunchtime is very good.
16. In mainstream lessons the attitudes and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs are generally no different to that of other pupils in the class. Where learning support assistants (LSAs) are present to support pupils with special educational needs this is accepted well by all pupils; pupils not designated as having special educational needs often taking advantage of LSA's presence and seeking extra help themselves. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs in the Years 7 to 9 'Base' are very good and this results in a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere. Year 11 pupils with statements of special educational need are particularly appreciative of the help, support and guidance they have received from the learning support department throughout their time in school.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.8	School data	1.7
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

17. Attendance is just below the national average but is satisfactory because monitoring and promotion of good attendance within the school are good and consistent. Parents are kept well informed about their children's attendance. Unauthorised absences are above the national average but this reflects the school's strict approach; few reasons for absence are accepted. There are certain groups of pupils, notably in Years 10 and 11, who bring the overall attendance rate down and the school monitors these groups very well. More could be done to change the entrenched poor attitudes to attendance of these minorities. In some subjects, monitoring has revealed that lower ability groups have lower attendance rates, for example in English. The school has recently installed an automated system for carrying out first-day of absence telephone calls which parents must respond to. This has been a good improvement and not only ensures effective recording of absences but also makes more efficient use of the time of staff involved in monitoring. Punctuality is good and lessons begin promptly. Form time at the start of day is satisfactorily used, although variable in effectiveness, but it does mean that almost all pupils are in school at the start of lessons.

18. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Tutor-times and assemblies help pupils to reflect mainly on moral and social issues, and on spiritual issues to a lesser extent. Work in personal, social and health education, and citizenship, offers good opportunities for reflection on, and exploration of, the views and ideas of others. Although teachers in some subjects, such as English and religious education, provide opportunities for pupils to explain and defend their ideas, beliefs and principles, there is no co-ordinated approach to developing spirituality across the curriculum.
19. The school promotes a strong moral code, evident in the 'Fair Play' posters on display in the gymnasium and elsewhere within the physical education department. Some teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to explore and debate issues vigorously and show mutual respect for different ideas. For example, pupils' understanding and awareness of moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia are raised in religious education lessons, and issues of appropriate responses to crime are discussed within citizenship.
20. Pupils generally relate well with one another. Their social and cultural understanding is enriched by good extra-curricular activities. Pupils and students from different year groups were seen during the inspection to be very helpful in greeting strangers to the school and taking them to where they needed to be. Respect for each other's work and abilities is actively promoted within art and design and physical education.
21. There is not a wide range of heritages represented within the school community and the school could do more to explore aspects of different cultures, for example, in assemblies and through greater recognition of different cultural traditions. One good example of this already happening was noted within the dance curriculum.

Sixth Form

22. Students are very positive about the school. They also comment positively on the impact of the new headteacher. All have come through the school itself and feel privileged to have the opportunity of being in the sixth form. This is reflected in attendance figures which are good and they are studious and hardworking in most lessons. Students are keen to take on responsibilities on behalf of the school but are not enterprising in generating new ideas or new ways to promote the school. In this they are hampered by not having their own council or forum in which to discuss and lead such opportunities but they are also hampered by low numbers especially in Year 13. Neither does the sixth form curriculum or management promote many opportunities for sixth formers to work in a co-ordinated way outside of their main lessons. They fulfil their prefect responsibilities very well, acting as very good role models for other pupils in terms of behaviour and being sensible. Their own behaviour is exemplary.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good overall; the curriculum is unsatisfactory; care, guidance and support are all satisfactory; the partnership with parents is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 11, links with other educational providers are good and links with the wider community are satisfactory. In the sixth form, links with other providers are satisfactory for current students whilst links with the community are unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 11, and satisfactory in the sixth form. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Teachers' assessment used in the classroom and of pupils' work is satisfactory overall in all years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good spread of very good or better teaching across subjects meaning teachers have easy access to best practice to help them improve.
- Pupils' basic skills, such as numeracy, are below average and hinder independent work.
- Support provided by learning support assistants is most often very good and helps pupils with special educational needs achieve well in and out of lessons.
- Gifted and talented pupils, the most able, are not identified well enough in most subjects and it is not possible to deduce whether they are achieving high enough standards; physical education and music are particular exceptions to this – talented pupils get moved on.
- Teaching and learning in art and design in Years 7 to 11 are excellent and pupils achieve well above average standards.
- Sports College status has spurred improving teaching and learning in physical education and fostered improved attitudes across the school.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 110 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3(3%)	16(15%)	44(44%)	42(38%)	5(5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

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

23. Of the 700 parents who replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire, 539 said that teaching is good and similar numbers said their children were making good progress and teachers helped them become mature and independent. Inspectors agree that teaching and learning are good overall and that achievement in lessons, and progress, are also good. Pupils' learning is not as good as the teaching they receive because basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT are weak and independent study and application is not strong. In addition, despite teachers' marking being satisfactory, the school's overall assessment system is unsatisfactory and the curriculum is unsatisfactory. These, combined with other factors in recent years, for example disruption due to building, means pupils did not do well enough in GCSE examinations, they did not achieve standards they were capable of given good teaching. Neither are all pupils fully aware of what standards they should be aiming for nor, too often, how they should improve their work. All subjects provide satisfactory or better teaching. Teaching in art and design is excellent and has led to well above average standards in work and examinations. Teaching in English, science, ICT, music, physical education and religious education is good. Overall, pupils still underachieve in ICT and in religious education because the curriculum in each is unsatisfactory, although improvements are underway. Neither do teachers, overall, use ICT enough to help their teaching; this remains a matter of access to computers and interactive whiteboards, which should soon begin improving.
24. There was a handful of unsatisfactory lessons, offset by rather more very good and excellent lessons. Unsatisfactory lessons were almost all in Years 7 to 9 and scattered across four subject areas. All such lessons lacked planning, challenge and a focus. This is surprising considering the work the school has done on the National Key Stage 3 Strategy which, simplistically, is based around a well planned start, middle and end to a lesson. Most other lessons adopted this approach. Only one of the unsatisfactory lessons led to unsatisfactory pupil attitudes. This is unusual and underpins the judgement of good behaviour which the inspection came, and which, this time, is contrary to parents' views. Very good or better lessons were spread across eight subjects, showing examples of best practice are easily observable by most teachers. Art and design had four such lessons, including one excellent; English had four in Years 7 to 9, science had two and religious education had two, including one excellent. In these very good and better lessons, planning was very detailed, pupils were involved in their learning, there were high expectations, and time was used very well. The following quotes are from lesson observations of very good or better lessons. "Not a minute was wasted"; "targets were clear"; "pupils worked with enthusiasm throughout"; "methods that made pupils think"; "attention to literacy and the needs of pupils with special educational needs"; "an exciting learning situation"; "an extraordinary response from a non-examination group"; "achievement of lower attainers especially good, they are spurred on by helpful resources and high expectations". What is clear is that pupils are amenable to learning, respond very well to teaching and achieve in proportion to the quality of that teaching.
25. Some 177 parents consider there is something wrong with homework and the rather fewer parents at the inspection meeting were split on this. Inspectors never saw much evidence to come to a conclusion – the term was still early. Homework was certainly being set in lessons during the inspection. Pupils said they had enough, some completed it at lunchtimes. It seems likely a review of practice would be useful and that it should be tied in with study skills and a

general improvement in general knowledge and research around topics. Sixth formers are weak in basic skills and knowledge so more should be done to foster these elements of learning during Years 7 to 11.

26. Teachers are well aware of the needs of pupils on the school's list of special educational needs. They have copies of pupils' IEPs as well as very useful summary information provided for each student on this list. Targets on IEPs are discrete and sharp thus helping teachers plan their work to meet the needs of these pupils. Where observed, LSAs provided effective support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs. In a physical education lesson, for example, an LSA enabled the participation of a reluctant pupil with physical needs. In pre-school and lunchtime sessions in the school library, working relationships between LSAs and pupils are very good and pupils welcome the support and consequently improve their literacy skills as well as subject coursework. Pupils with special educational needs also benefit from special needs teachers from the learning support department who teach the lowest attaining 'sets' in English as well as working in other departments. In mathematics lessons, however, the quality of LSA support is not as effective because of insufficient liaison between subject teachers and LSAs. Pupils' work, across the range of subjects, is consistently marked by teachers but the quality of comments provided lacks consistency. In the Years 7 to 9 'Base' pupils are well supported by LSAs.
27. Not enough is done to meet the needs of the more able, although talented pupils are managed well in physical education and in music. Able or gifted pupils seem not to be identified in lessons at all except they presumably appear in higher 'sets' (classes with relatively higher attainers).
28. As a result of specialist Sports College status the school has been able to employ more specialist physical education teachers. Their range of experience and expertise is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning in the subject as well as improving pupils' attitudes elsewhere.

Sixth form

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 19 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	5	13	1	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

29. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the five subjects on which the inspection focused. Teaching was best in English literature. In subjects that were just sampled, teaching and learning were satisfactory overall in the few lessons seen. Students' low standards on entry to the sixth form mean that many struggle to learn at higher-level courses. A lack of provision for key skills and study skills support is not helpful and hinders any potential students may have for independent study. Teachers have to spend too much time in lessons compensating for students' lack of basic skills and too often thin knowledge and understanding of the work in hand or of the work to come.
30. Very good relationships are a feature of most lessons and, where teaching is more successful, good support is given to students. In English literature lessons, for example, discussions are set at appropriate levels and teaching styles are adapted to ensure students are engaged. In business studies lessons, however, small class sizes makes it difficult to enable debate and discussions between learners. In sociology lessons unclear objectives and a lack of coherent

structure means that learning is not clarified. As a result, students are not enabled to locate ideas within key social traditions.

The curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall; it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11, and poor in the sixth form. Opportunities for pupils and students outside of lessons are good; sporting opportunities are very extensive. Accommodation and resources are good overall. However, ongoing problems with recent building and associated design weaknesses continue to hinder curriculum development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The requirements to provide religious education and ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not met.
- The range of vocational courses offered in Years 10 and 11 is too small and off-site provision has not been well enough monitored, although monitoring has improved recently.
- The alternative curriculum helps pupils who might otherwise have been excluded to remain in school.
- The range of courses and enrichment opportunities in physical education and sport are very good.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities.
- In the sixth form, many students are following courses which do not meet their needs and aspirations; there are no courses in key skills or general studies and there is no provision for religious education.

Commentary

31. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is suitably broad and balanced, and enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily academically and to develop well as maturing young adults. The wide range of opportunities in physical education and sport offered to pupils in all years is appropriate for the school's Sports College status. The recently revised programme for personal, health and social education makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal development. It incorporates aspects of citizenship and meets national requirements for sex, relationship and drug education.
32. The curriculum does not meet requirements for the provision of ICT in Years 10 and 11 for those pupils who do not take ICT as a GCSE subject. This is because timetable arrangements do not allow enough time to cover adequately national requirements. Neither is ICT used consistently or adequately across all other subjects, largely due to current inadequate access to ICT resources. As a result, pupils overall achieve unsatisfactorily in ICT by the end of Year 11 (those taking examination courses achieve satisfactorily). There is not enough time in Years 10 and 11 to cover the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education; neither is religious education offered as a GCSE subject. Both weaknesses adversely affect standards in religious education. Lack of both ICT and religious education provision was identified at the time of the last inspection and has not been dealt with.
33. The school has identified the need to improve curriculum provision for Years 10 and 11 to meet the needs of its pupils better. Currently pupils can study a second modern foreign language if they take classes in their lunch break. There is a range of vocational courses offered both in school and in partnership with local providers but the range of work is narrow and relatively few pupils participate in it. The school has organised the curriculum appropriately so that the pupils who do get taught off site continue to receive a core curriculum, for example English, mathematics and science, on their days in school. A dual award GCSE in engineering is provided through an external local provider but pupils on it performed particularly badly in 2004; there was insufficient monitoring of pupils' work by the school which is now beginning to be addressed. In addition, insufficient thought was given to the prior attainment and attitudes of pupils joining this course. The provider is now looking at

alternative, more suitable accreditation for some pupils. An 'alternative curriculum' for pupils who are in danger of being excluded from school has been successful in keeping most in school and has enabled them eventually to return to mainstream classes. This 'alternative' includes personal development work at outdoor centres. The curriculum is developing. Year 10, more able, pupils can choose to follow three separate sciences and the physical education department is considering BTEC accredited physical education.

34. Overall, curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs have full and equal access to the curriculum and are fully involved in the life of the school. Younger pupils with special educational needs work in the Years 7 to 9 'Base' and some older pupils in the alternative curriculum group. The positive ethos of inclusion and support for pupils with special educational needs has a positive impact on the social development and learning experience of these pupils as well as that of all other pupils in the school. Formal extra-curricular provision run by LSAs means pupils with special educational needs have the opportunity to ask for and receive extra subject and specific support and guidance during the week. There are also opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy skills through attendance at the learning support department ICT suite where they work on a commercially produced programme. Departments are kept fully informed of special educational needs as a result of regular liaison with the subject link group and the learning support department. However, the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs across subjects is inconsistent. In art and design, for example, it is very good whereas in mathematics it is sound and in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology it is unsatisfactory.
35. As a result of specialist Sports College status, curriculum breadth and range in physical education are now very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where all pupils now have the opportunity to follow accredited courses. These include the junior sports leaders award (JSLA) course; BTEC certificated courses and GCSE physical education as well as GCSE dance. Cross-curricular links with physical education are now developing, for example the science department use the fitness suite for a unit of work in Year 9 and the mathematics department have benefited from extra ICT resources.
36. There is a good range of clubs and activities at lunchtimes and after school and these are reasonably well attended. Participation in sport outside lesson time is very good and reflects the school's specialist status very well. The school enriches the curriculum well through events such as art gallery and theatre visits, musical productions and visits abroad. Satisfactory support for study outside the school day is provided through extra revision classes and a variety of clubs.
37. Accommodation and resources are good overall and accommodation is certainly better than the large number of temporary classrooms the school used up to several years ago. However, the new build has often cut corners, is not up to the high standards of build quality seen in some new schools and has problems waiting to happen, for example sinks in science and laboratory layout in general, cookers and dust extraction in design and technology, coldness and overheating in many areas. Lack of thought regarding the movement of pupils also creates potential behavioural trouble spots and health and safety concerns which will be with the school for years. The new build, though welcome, is certainly not a 'school for the future' and does little to foster innovation and development of the school curriculum. Though resources are good, ICT development is not at present, though it should improve soon. Again, the new build causes problems; the wireless network promised is not yet working, ICT rooms are not easily accessible, ICT rooms overheat, and classrooms have not been wired to enable fixed ICT projectors and interactive whiteboards to be quickly fitted.
38. Staffing is good overall. There are few problems associated with recruitment and the school's own involvement in teacher training has helped a lot. Staffing is expensive compared to most schools.

39. The learning support department is well staffed. Along with an experienced special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) there are four specialist learning support teachers and sufficient LSAs to support those pupils with statements of special educational need as well as other pupils on the school's list of special educational needs. LSAs are enthusiastic and committed to working with pupils with special educational needs and their effective deployment ensures the curricular needs of these pupils are met. Dedicated accommodation for the learning support department is accessible by parents or pupils with mobility needs. There are good ICT resources in the learning support department to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
40. As a result of specialist Sports College status, the match of teachers to the curriculum in physical education is very good and new build accommodation has resulted in very good quality indoor facilities. This includes a sports hall, fitness suite and dance studio and is helping raise standards of pupils' work. The department also benefits from a dedicated computer suite and a range of other ICT resources to support pupils' learning.

Sixth form

41. The school offers a small range of AS and A-level courses. In addition there are advanced vocational courses in leisure and recreation and in business studies, and intermediate vocational courses in business studies and health and social care. Through joint provision with a local college there are courses in law and in psychology. With the exception of biology and history at A-level, and health and social care in Year 12, all courses have fewer than eight students. Historically, many students have left during or at the end of Year 12, typically with no additional qualifications. The school has identified as urgent the need to expand the range of suitable courses and is in the process of reviewing provision with a view to making it more appropriate.
42. Many students are on courses which are inappropriate given their prior low attainment at GCSE. This is partly because the advice they received in Year 11 did not guide them well enough into suitable courses and partly because the right courses are not available to them. The few students following health and social care spend well over three days doing very little; there is no planned programme of work to allow them to improve skills, attain another qualification, or attend a monitored work placement.
43. The school does not offer a course in 'key skills' (literacy, numeracy, ICT and study skills) to Years 12 and 13. Given the overall low levels of such skills of many students when they begin Year 12, this is a very significant weakness in the curriculum. Neither is there any opportunity for students to study general studies to provide diversity in, and broaden, their general knowledge. The curriculum does not meet the requirements of local agreement on the provision of religious education for all students.
44. Opportunities for students to participate in timetabled recreational sport are offered, but there is little take-up for this. Some students who may wish to participate are unable to do so because their other subjects are timetabled at the same time as the sport. Appropriately for the school's specialist status, a small number of students have taken up the opportunity to take the Community Sports Leaders' Award. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities available to the sixth form, including a good range of sporting activities.
45. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers. The accommodation for Years 12 and 13 is very good and resources are good.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is satisfactory. The support, advice and guidance they receive based on monitoring are unsatisfactory overall, though there are very good features. The involvement of pupils through seeking and acting on their views is good, whilst it is satisfactory for students in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care, welfare and support are good and the learning mentor provision is very good.
- Effective school-wide assessment arrangements are undeveloped.
- Health and safety issues related to the new building and its resources have not been resolved quickly enough and overburden school managers.
- The good school council provision is supplemented by detailed annual pupil questionnaires.
- Induction procedures, to help pupils join the school, are good.

Commentary

46. Central to the school's good pastoral support for pupils is provision of 'learning mentors'. Pupils often cite them as adults to whom they can turn for advice. They are also directly involved in good academic support. Other members of staff use their skills if they have a concern about a pupil. Pupils refer their friends to them or ask them to see their friends. They have played a key role in good child protection arrangements because of their accessibility and the trust they have engendered. The school operates a good training scheme for learning mentors offering them active shadowing (of experienced staff) and responsibility roles. The learning mentor provision penetrates through the school, raises pupils' levels of self-confidence and makes pupils feel safe. The positive impact on pupils' self-confidence affects all aspects of their development from learning to careers choices. Careers advice itself is good for those leaving school but advice to Year 11 pupils about staying on in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.
47. The school has yet to develop a comprehensive assessment system through which it can accurately assess and target improvements in pupils' learning. As a result, the quality of academic guidance is not precise enough. Pupils are not consistently set appropriate targets so that they know what they need to do to improve. The system in place is not used methodically or exhaustively and varies widely across departments. In English and science it is better than in mathematics and geography, for example. The lack of a good quality system consistently applied means that gains in pupils' achievement are not always being recognised or built on. Pupils' overall potential, therefore, is not being fully explored. The new school management team recognises that an efficient assessment and recording system is needed and the new headteacher has taken swift action to start setting one up.
48. The school draws on a wide range of assessment data to help guide the appropriate placement of pupils on the school's list of pupils with special educational needs. Whole-school data provides the potential to closely track the progress pupils with special educational needs make. However, the analysis of this data is not sufficiently well developed to show, for example, how well pupils with special educational needs are progressing year on year. Similarly, there is little analysis of national end of Year 9 test results, teacher assessments, or GCSE data, to highlight how well pupils with special educational needs achieve. The school has very effective relationships with outside specialist agencies that enhance further the quality of support and guidance for those pupils with special educational needs. Annual reviews are effective and support pupils with statements of special educational need as they move through the school. Parents and pupils' views are taken into account because they are involved in the setting and reviewing of their targets at such reviews. The school meets curricular requirements as outlined in pupils' statements of special educational need.

49. The school 'completed' an extensive new build about 12 months ago with the management and care of all the buildings remaining in the hands of the developer for 25 years. There is a number of outstanding health and safety issues, some of which appear impossible to resolve well, for example the badly planned link between the new and old buildings which is seriously congested at lesson changeover times. There are also problems in some subject areas, particularly design and technology and science. Whilst the local education authority and the school work long and hard to minimise these problems and to ensure systems or decisions keep pupils from harm, results remain unsatisfactory and adversely affect the work of the school as well as soaking up human and financial resources which would be better directed to raising pupils' attainment. Both the local education authority and the school are hindered by the tedious contract between the users of the buildings and the owners of the buildings and the current disarray the owners appear to be in. The situation the school finds itself in is untenable and contrary to the best interests of pupils.
50. Pupils interviewed spoke highly of the school council and representatives are proud of its achievements. The changes in girls' uniform are quoted as a good example of the positive impact it has had. This also reflects well on the way the school responded to their concerns. A detailed pupil questionnaire has been put in place by the school. Results have been comprehensively analysed and reveal gender and year differences in opinion clearly. The questionnaire will be an annual event.
51. The school's Sports College status means a higher than usual number of primary pupils know the school as a venue. The young sports leaders programme available to primary pupils brings them into contact with teachers at this school before they start in Year 7. In addition, parents turn-out for the most recent induction meeting in early September was high; many parents made favourable comments on how the school informed and involved them. Once in the school, all pupils may use the 'buddy base' classroom at lunchtime, three days per week, when they feel the need to go somewhere quiet. It is mainly Year 7 pupils who make use of this facility. These features of the school ensure induction is good.

Sixth form

52. Students are given inadequate advice, guidance and support. Students are unable to make an informed choice of courses in the sixth form because of the lack of well-informed guidance to individual students both prior to entry into the sixth form and during their courses. As a result, too many students start and continue on courses which are not appropriate in relation to their prior attainment. They therefore find courses too difficult and there is significant underachievement as a result. This situation is exacerbated because there are no effective structures for tracking students' progress either on courses within the sixth form or on courses at partner schools and colleges; the outcome is particularly acute in the sciences and in psychology where a large proportion of students fail to achieve a grade at AS and A-level.
53. Appropriate support in terms of key skills and study skills, which would help students to develop the skills required to meet the demands of advanced level courses, is not available.
54. Students' views are taken into account. Students are pleased with the provision made for them and feel that they are listened to but there is no discrete sixth-form council.
55. Students are given appropriate impartial guidance for next steps provided by Connexions and the local careers service. They also have access to the careers library and ICT programs for prospectuses for university entrance and are given appropriate guidance in applying to university by their tutors.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

For pupils in Years 7 to 11, the school has satisfactory links with parents and satisfactory links with the community. Links with other educational providers are good. For students in the sixth form, links with the community are unsatisfactory overall, though the community sports leader programme is good; students' links with other educational providers are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new headteacher has already ensured that the school is more approachable to parents than their answers in the parents' OFSTED questionnaire indicated.
- The school's role as the hub of area sports links has forged very good links with those schools involved.
- The sixth form is not involved enough with the community or with potential employers.

Commentary

56. With the appointment of the new headteacher and senior management team the school now offers broadly the same links as are found in most schools. Information to parents of both the general and the more specific kind, such as annual pupil reports, is satisfactory. However, the organisation of parents' information evenings appears to have been unsatisfactory. Previous shortcomings in the school prospectus have been corrected by the new headteacher and senior management team. Similarly, the headteacher has focused on trying to ensure that parents feel free to contact the school at any time and to assure them that their concerns will be listened to. Their concerns about behaviour are now being addressed. However, these new moves have yet to take full effect on the quality of links with parents and restore many parents' confidence in the responsiveness of the school. Although parents are clearly concerned about what the school has to offer, as indicated for example by the very high response rate to the pre-inspection questionnaire, there is no parent fund-raising association. Parents' views have been polled in the last school year but the school has not actively responded apart from analysing the data. The recent installation of the new automated attendance call to parents is a good improvement. The quality of the links with parents is improving under the new headteacher and senior management team as parents themselves have testified.
57. There are effective links between the learning support department and the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are invited to and attend annual reviews of pupils with statements of special educational need. Their views are recorded; hence they are fully involved and informed as to their child's progress towards the targets set out as part of the review process. However, procedures for involving parents and pupils in the setting and reviewing of targets on IEPs are less well developed. The learning support department has close links with primary feeder schools and as a result provision for incoming pupils is planned in advance.
58. The major drive by the school to create sports links with other local schools has been very successful in raising the profile of sport in the area. Thirty-nine primary and seven secondary schools are involved. Nine different sports associations have been created locally for schools and clubs to work together, although the school itself is only actively participating in five of these. The rugby association is a fine example of the success of some of these. The school is allied with a neighbouring institution for the performing arts. Links with primary schools have been strengthened by the young sports leaders' programmes, which have a positive impact on pupils' personal development. Primary schools are also linked through specialist teaching and through the 'active playgrounds' programme. Transfer arrangements are satisfactory overall. Although induction arrangements are good, as described in the section of this report dealing

with care and guidance, arrangements for students to access other courses in the sixth form are limited.

59. Links with other training and learning providers are good in that they exist and feed the 'alternative curriculum' and vocational opportunities in Years 10 and 11. However, they have not been monitored effectively enough to see if they are fully benefiting pupils or providing best value. For example, the numbers of pupils following an engineering dual award GCSE largely off site would be commendable if they had success in examinations and, less significant, the use of a local language college to provide ICT support for languages has not been balanced against loss of lesson time, the management difficulties of walking pupils to it, or the capability of this school to provide comparable support itself.
60. The school is used as a base for community clubs after school, most notably a disabled sports club, but these links are often associated with other schools rather than directly with the community. Visits and visitors contribute to pupils' learning but tend to be driven by individual departments rather than a whole-school strategy of community involvement. Links with the community do not therefore extend beyond what would be found in most schools.

The sixth form

61. The community sports leader awards are a good feature of sixth form links with the community but, overall, too few links exist and students' achievement is not helped enough by appropriate links. No information about informal links with community groups was provided during the inspection; some charity work does go on. Year 13 is very small and Year 12 had only just started their studies and this may explain why any links are not obvious or currently in place. Links with other educational providers are satisfactory for those students currently in the sixth form, for example several students are enabled to follow law and psychology at a local college, taxi fares being met by the school. However, such links are few and not part of a shared provision which is the future intention of the school and the local education authority. There are very few links between most students on courses and potential future employers. This lack is particularly noticeable in the course on health and social care; some students have several days free each week in which community or employer placements would prove beneficial to them. The school says they are hindered in attempts to improve work related placements for sixth form students because the school is not able to ensure health and safety requirements and Connexions does not appear to provide an appropriate service.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are each satisfactory overall in the main, 11 to 16, school. The new headteacher has a very clear sense of purpose and very high aspirations for the school and his presence is already well appreciated by pupils, parents and staff. Leadership of the sixth form element of the school is unsatisfactory and management of it is poor; the school knows much has to be done to improve the sixth form. Governance of the main school is unsatisfactory, and of the sixth form, poor.

Statutory requirements of the school curriculum for the provision of ICT, religious education (in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form), and a daily act of collective worship are not met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations of the headteacher are very good.

- Leaders' commitment to inclusion, promotion of equality and concern for the needs of individuals are good and leaders act as good role models for other staff and pupils.
- The governing body is apparently unaware of the shortcomings in the sixth form, failure to meet statutory requirements, or of the lack of clarity in financial planning.
- School self-evaluation and the monitoring of performance data and taking action have been unsatisfactory but are improving rapidly.
- The induction of staff and commitment to initial teacher training are good.
- Financial management and best-value principles are unsatisfactory overall and poor in the sixth form.

Commentary

62. The headteacher is very new to the school and most of the senior management team are very new to their posts, many of which are acting posts. Consequently, not enough time has passed to judge their long-term effectiveness. However, the headteacher has consistently and effectively identified the priorities for improvement in the very short time he has been in post. For example, the main issues of raising standards and pupil achievement through a coherent and clear assessment system have been established as the biggest change required to improve the school. A committed team approach has been created with the almost entirely new senior management team ensuring that all new initiatives and plans for change are discussed within the agreed overall vision for the school. The team has moved quickly to identify gaps in the strategic planning of the school. The headteacher is committed to inclusion and the promotion of equality as befits one of the established aims of the school to be a centre for the disabled. In their commitment and enthusiasm, leaders act as good role models for other staff and pupils. The headteacher in particular sets a good example to pupils through his firm line on discipline. He has taken time and trouble to explain it to them thus developing an atmosphere of mutual respect. Parents too are already pleased with the positive attitude he has shown towards discipline and in communicating with them.
63. In mitigation of negative views expressed by some parents and pupils about the style of past leadership and management, it should be noted that the school has just come through several years of trauma associated with new building and the Private Finance Initiative which funded it. There is no doubt that dealing with massive problems associated with construction, site management and ever changing project direction, used up far too much school management time. Views from officers of the local authority, school staff, and local headteachers are that the tenacity of previous school leadership, in tackling site development problems, means that there are fewer still hanging on than there would have been if less time had been devoted to them (problems in some other local schools being built under this initiative are far worse). In addition, once the school site had achieved 'steady state' status (a peculiar term which seems to mean emerging problems are balanced by problems which have been solved) the low GCSE results of 2003 were much improved upon in 2004. The new headteacher and management are not immune from the building and initiative they have inherited and much senior management, administrative and local authority time is still devoted to it.
64. The chair of governors resigned just prior to the inspection and his replacement had not started work at the time of the inspection. Governors are very supportive of the school's work, particularly the area of special educational needs, but have not necessarily challenged what they have been told or have not received information they need. The governance of the school is unsatisfactory overall if for no other reasons, for failure to meet several statutory requirements, some of which were identified at the time of the last inspection. Tough questions about the viability of the sixth form, for example, have not been asked and in monitoring financial cost-effectiveness and best-value they have also failed to ask telling questions. Several other statutory duties have not been fulfilled, for example reporting to parents requirements – now rectified.

65. The school's self-evaluation has been unsatisfactory in some aspects, notably with regard to the sixth form. The analysis and use of performance data and reviewing any patterns in it are the most significant weakness as data available to the school clearly shows underperformance. Even significantly improved GCSE results in 2004 are not close to potential results now recognised by the school as appropriate targets for the future. Governors were unaware of much of the data available to the school prior to this inspection.
66. Leadership and management of subjects, the middle management of the school, are satisfactory overall and quite often good. Most heads of department tackle their individual monitoring and self-review at least satisfactorily and two, art and design and English, well or very well. Effective leadership has resulted in a good whole-school ethos for the inclusion of and support of pupils with special educational needs. Leadership has ensured the ethos of provision and support for pupils with special educational needs has a high profile and that staff are fully involved in the overall provision for them. There is a clear vision for future provision and development planning is well linked to whole-school areas for improvement. Sound management has ensured LSAs are deployed effectively to provide the required support for pupils with statements of special educational need and those at the school action stage of the Code of Practice for special educational needs. This provides the breadth and level of support required for these pupils. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the support staff are well embedded as a result of the appraisal system they are part of. However, analysis and evaluation of data vis-à-vis pupils with special educational needs are not well developed nor are the monitoring and provision for these pupils across subject departments. The learning support department benefits well from dedicated administrative support.
67. Leadership and management of sporting provision are effective. There is a clear grasp of the role of specialist provision in raising standards of achievement and developing curricular provision. A detailed improvement plan provides a vision for the future and the school clearly has the capacity for further improvement in relation to its specialist status.
68. The induction of new staff has been good and such people say they feel well supported. There is also a good picture in the management of the initial teacher training programme which has helped ensure the school has remained well staffed in difficult times nationally. The training needs of learning support assistants are well met and they have just been included in the school performance management programme. The learning mentor training provision is also well managed and mentors play a prominent part in the care and support of pupils.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,341,995	Balance from previous year	78,501
Total expenditure	4,501,337	Balance carried forward to the next	-80,841*
Expenditure per pupil	3,989		

* deficit because of delays in receiving £92,000 due in the 2003/4 financial year. These funds were received in 2004/5.

69. There is an unsatisfactory approach to ensuring that finances help achieve educational priorities. The most recent audit identified the issue of the budget not being linked to the school's development plans. This is now being addressed by the new headteacher through the introduction of a costed plan. Currently, there is no process to ensure that the curriculum is funded according to the prioritised needs of the school. Records do not show whether funding

allocated for a specific purpose, for example the education of pupils with special educational needs, has been deployed to that end or not.

70. Governors review the school's proposed budget and they monitor expenditure on a regular basis. However, minutes of governors' meetings do not record approval being granted for increases in the school's teaching staff or the increase in allowances to post-holders. The school spends considerably more money on teaching than is generally the case.
71. Accounts for the 2003/4 financial year record a deficit. However, this arose because the school, through procedural errors on the part of the local authority, did not receive funding due in that period in respect of specialist college status. This money was received after the end of the year. Had it been received at the due time, the balance would have been positive.
72. Because of the lack of accurate accounting procedures in respect of specific funding, the school is not in a position to comply with the principles of best value. The finance manager is beginning to make use of data on comparative costs to assess the school's expenditure but this is not yet being used by governors. The school receives more money per pupil than average. As best value is not complied with and examination results are not as high as they should be the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Sixth Form

73. Leadership and management of the sixth form are poor. Governance of the sixth form is poor. Governors are uninformed about the sixth form provision, its cost and the results students achieve; the governing body is therefore unable to effectively challenge or support the school.
74. Students enter the sixth form with standards that are lower than average for advanced level courses. The curriculum provided does not take their needs sufficiently into account; as a result, a large proportion of students undertake courses which are not appropriate for them and fail to achieve grades at AS and A-level. The school has access to data which would enable it to review patterns and take action to adapt the provision to meet the needs and aspirations of the students it serves better. Despite significant underachievement, evident in the results in 2003 and 2004, the school does not use the data effectively for self-evaluation and review.
75. Because students enter the sixth form with lower than average grades the majority finds the demands of AS and A-level courses too great. This is partly because they are offered little in the way of support, either through induction procedures or through a planned programme of key skills and study skills to help them bridge the gap between GCSE and A-level courses.
76. No close monitoring of the costs associated with the education of pupils in the sixth form is undertaken. There is a poor approach to ensuring that financial management helps achieve the educational priorities of the sixth form. Because many of the teaching groups are small, the sixth form draws upon funds provided for the education of younger pupils. Governors are not aware of this situation. As too many students either do not complete courses or do not achieve a qualification, the sixth form provides poor value for money.
77. The new head of sixth form has only been in post since September; he has, however, identified the main weaknesses and strategies to redress them, although the impact of this has yet to be seen.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work related learning

Provision for work related learning (WRL) is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Not enough is done to evaluate the impact of the resources deployed in WRL.
- Not all subjects address WRL.
- Pupils benefit from engaging in a range of WRL initiatives.
- Careers education is well planned.

Commentary

78. Planning for the teaching of WRL is satisfactory in business and communications studies, English, history, physical education and science; less so in other subjects where the curriculum does not routinely develop understanding of business or work, or use work as a context for learning. Provision is made in design and technology for pupils to take a dual award GCSE in engineering but only about a half of all candidates entered in 2004 secured a pass grade.
79. There is a number of activities designed to make pupils aware of the world of employment and work. Provision is made through the City Learning Centre for 'Young Engineers', for the Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) construction course, the school's 'alternative curriculum' and for 'Young Enterprise'. Fifteen of the more able girls are involved in the 'Girls Entering Tomorrow's Science, Engineering and Technology' (GETSET) programme where they work with other schools in small groups to solve various problems such as building bridges and making a satellite dish. A small number of less able pupils take part in the 'National Skills Profile', an 'entry level' qualification for those for whom the existing qualification framework is deemed inappropriate. Several pupils, mostly boys, follow the 'Young Apprenticeship' scheme in conjunction with their 'off site' provision in engineering. Little evaluation takes place to determine the impact of these activities.
80. Careers education is sound. Several teachers are qualified in careers education and guidance. Teaching in the careers lessons seen was satisfactory. Pupils show interest and application. There is a strong emphasis on health and safety in the workplace. Effective use is made of ICT in assessing pupils' aptitudes for different jobs. The school has well-established links with the local Connexions service. The pupils interviewed said they were pleased with the support they were receiving. They find staff very accessible and always willing to offer support on an individual basis. All Year 11 pupils are afforded the opportunity to take part in a week's work experience and the preparation for this is good. There is no rigorous evaluation of the impact of careers or work experience on students' personal development, understanding of the workplace or achievement.
81. The school offers a range of vocational subjects, including for students in the sixth form (though numbers here are low). These include GCSEs in business as well as business and communications systems, and ICT, and GNVQs in business, leisure and tourism, health and social care, health and early years services social care, and leisure and recreation. There is no evaluation of the performance of students in these different subjects as it relates to their achievement.
82. Leadership and management in WRL are satisfactory overall. Staff involved are very committed to the needs of all students. While there is wide ranging provision, not enough is done to monitor outcomes rigorously or to evaluate the cost effectiveness of the different strands of activity.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are average across Years 7 to 11 and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good, supported by teachers' thorough planning and preparation.
- Marking and assessment are consistently good and help pupils' work improve.
- Leadership and management are good and have already led to coherent schemes of work in Years 7 to 9.
- Links with the learning support department are developing well.
- Poor use is made of ICT to support teaching or learning.
- Accommodation for books and other resources is inadequate.

Commentary

83. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Results in tests and examinations continue to be some of the highest in the school. The head of department has been in post since September 2004 and has already ensured the approach to teaching in Years 7 to 9 builds coherently on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding.
84. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average compared to the attainment of pupils with similar prior attainment in other schools. Results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 appear to be even better. Standards of work seen in current Year 9 books are average, in line with national expectations overall but with fewer pupils producing work much above average. Pupils achieve well.
85. At GCSE in 2003, the proportion of pupils attaining an A* - C grade was well below the national average and below the average attained by pupils of similar prior attainment, though above that found in similar schools deemed 'secondary modern'. The proportion getting these higher grades was too low whereas the proportion attaining a grade between A* and G was at the national average and better than might be expected. 2004 showed more pupils getting higher grades and results overall are likely better than might have been expected of pupils with similar prior attainment. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are average overall and pupils achieve well. Good assessment and marking are providing pupils with clear targets for improvement.
86. The larger proportion of boys than girls across the school is reflected in English classes which are 'setted' by ability. Results in both tests and examinations show the attainment of boys is lower than that of girls and lower ability sets have a larger proportion of boys whilst higher ability sets have a balance or larger proportion of girls.
87. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall and such pupils achieve as well as other pupils. Support assistants provide extra literacy tuition and pupils in some of the lowest ability sets are taught by learning support teachers. However, the pupils in these sets do not always have the same learning opportunities as pupils in other classes and there is also

some inconsistency in the detailed assessment of their work. These matters are now being addressed by the head of department and the co-ordinator of learning support.

88. Teaching across all years is good overall; there was very good teaching in some lessons seen. Teachers prepare and plan their lessons well and provide suitable support materials to guide pupils' work. Learning objectives are clearly stated at the beginning of lessons and reinforced during them. As a result, learning and progress in lessons are also good. The management of pupils is very good; there were few occasions when teachers needed to intervene in order to make sure pupils were working 'on task'. When necessary, pupils settled well without constant reminders about behaviour. The very good lessons seen were characterised by very good planning and preparation, variety in the style of teaching and opportunities for group and individual working, which catered for the different needs of pupils. Lessons which were just satisfactory lacked this variety and planning and preparation were not as detailed or thorough.
89. A lesson with a lower ability Year 9 class was impressive as pupils prepared to write a formal letter containing a number of techniques to help the content be communicated. The starter activity ensured that their knowledge of the techniques was secure. They identified correctly, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, use of humour or shock tactics, forceful persuasion and repetition. They drafted and redrafted their letters and corrected spelling and punctuation prior to writing it up neatly. The end result was assessed by their partners using national criteria. More than half of the class had special educational needs, many for specific learning difficulties with language. They also had to assess whether they had met targets on their individual education plan. The teacher's preparation and the interesting work ensured that all pupils were highly motivated and completely engaged.
90. Leadership is good. There is a clear vision for the future of the department and very clear focus on the raising of pupils' achievement. The head of department provides a good role model for both staff and pupils.
91. The management of English is good. The new head of department has begun the process of writing a departmental handbook. Priorities such as marking and assessment and the raising of teachers' expectations have been dealt with and marking and assessment are now effectively helping standards improve.
92. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but some rooms have been built too small to accommodate an average class. Inadequate heating controls and poor ventilation creates difficulty, particularly in crowded classrooms. Lack of adequate storage for a central resource base has resulted in stock being dispersed and some pupils having to share books. There is no dedicated office space for the head of department which makes management harder than it should be. Use of computers is poor; there is just one computer for use within the department and pupils in English do not have easy access to ICT facilities. Use is made of ICT facilities in the library, which are limited. The limited amount of audio-visual equipment also limits the methods teachers can use to teach.
93. Within the curriculum, some of the topics discussed and the texts used make contributions to citizenship education. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development and the use of some texts, especially in Years 10 and 11, gives pupils experience of the literature of other cultures as well as their own. The study of the origins of the English language also provides opportunities for pupils to appreciate the multicultural nature of English. In Year 11, preparation for work experience provides insight into the world of work and contributes effectively to the work related curriculum.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

94. Provision for language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. There has been an improvement in the literacy skills with which pupils enter the school. However, pupils' writing and spelling skills, on entry, are less well developed than their reading skills. The support provided for pupils with specific literacy difficulties outside the normal timetable, in the early morning and lunchtimes is impressive. Learning support assistants have very good relationships with pupils and encourage and support their confidence. English and art and design provide very good support to help raise pupils' literacy. In subject areas where provision is good or better, teachers provide guidance and worksheets written at appropriate levels for pupils' needs. Speaking and listening skills are developed and work is marked effectively to correct spelling and punctuation. Key language associated with the subject is emphasised. There are several subject areas where literacy provision is unsatisfactory: mathematics, design and technology, and religious education in Years 10 and 11.

French and Spanish

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE examinations are improving.
- Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive and behaviour is good.
- Procedures for assessment are good but the use of assessment to meet the needs of groups of differing abilities in lessons is not sufficiently developed.
- Opportunities for pupils to use the languages themselves and for real purposes are limited.

Commentary

95. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards attained in GCSE results have improved significantly since the last report and have continued to rise steadily year on year.
96. GCSE results in 2003 for Spanish were well below average compared to those in all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was well below average. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was broadly average. However, a much higher proportion of pupils were entered for examinations than is the case nationally so that comparisons with national figures are unreliable. Boys' results were low compared with girls' results because of boys' unsatisfactory attitudes towards the subject. Results in 2004 are better than in 2003. The trend in results over the last three years is difficult to judge for each language because Spanish and French alternate as the first modern foreign language. However, as a whole, standards have risen and continue to rise steadily.
97. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average; pupils achieve satisfactorily. In work seen, there is no significant difference between boys' and girls' achievement. By Year 9, pupils can describe events in the past, present and future and express simple opinions. However, they cannot operate easily in French without reference to notes and prepared dialogues. This hinders them in responding spontaneously and, in French, sometimes has an adverse effect upon pronunciation and therefore their confidence. Standards of literacy are below average overall and this hinders pupils' achievement when the emphasis in lessons is predominantly on reading and writing. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average; pupils achieve satisfactorily. By Year 11, pupils can write at length and in some detail. They can identify the main points from extracts of speech and short texts. In Spanish and French they respond promptly and appropriately to questions, for example in a Year 11 Spanish lesson most pupils asked and answered questions about details of their holidays with confidence, lower attainers referring to notes to help them. However, they do not link or compare and contrast their ideas and the range of language and structures they can use from memory are limited.

98. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach and use them effectively to conduct activities. Pupils therefore benefit from very good role models and listening skills are well developed as a result. Pupils are given opportunities to practise informally in pairs but this is often limited to rehearsal rather than for real purposes. Teachers monitor pupils' progress closely and give help where necessary but lower attaining pupils have difficulty with listening activities because they are not always given the means to succeed. The emphasis in some lessons is on reading and writing to the detriment of speaking and listening; this encourages pupils' dependence on written notes and prompts and in turn inhibits their confidence in speaking and responding.
99. In Year 7, a good French lesson enabled pupils to achieve well and become confident in understanding and using classroom instructions. The language used to conduct activities was very well matched to pupils' experience and capabilities; they displayed clear understanding and responded promptly and with confidence to questions. New language was presented clearly using visual cues so that pupils rapidly understood and used the language successfully themselves and they were given frequent opportunities to practise. A guessing game was used to good effect to encourage them to use the new phrases and they responded enthusiastically. However, in a Year 9 lesson, although presentations were clear and pupils were given the opportunity to practise informally in pairs to give their opinions of different types of TV programmes, teacher led activities were lengthy, decreasing pupils' opportunities to use the language themselves and slowing the pace. Pupils were well behaved and well motivated and made satisfactory progress but lost concentration when they were not directly involved in activities. In Year 11, a good lesson in Spanish enabled pupils to achieve well because the lesson was well planned with short, manageable steps in learning and conducted at a brisk pace. Pupils developed reading skills very effectively because the nature of the text, a newspaper article about a footballer, immediately engaged their interest and motivated them to understand it. Reading techniques were very clearly demonstrated and developed using the overhead projector which enabled both pupils and their teacher to highlight key words and make explanations clear. In contrast, in a Year 10 French lesson pupils made satisfactory progress in a reading activity but the discussion lacked focus because it was done orally without direct and clear reference to key words so that it was uncertain as to whether all pupils were able to follow how answers were arrived at. Assessment procedures are good, marking regular and gives clear advice about how to improve but assessment data is not always used effectively to address the needs of groups of differing abilities within lessons to enable all pupils to experience success.
100. Leadership is satisfactory, management is good. Teaching and learning are monitored and the department works well together as a team to share ideas and spread good practice. Results are analysed and strategies are put into place to raise standards. The department has close links with centres in France and Spain and provides pupils with the opportunity to participate in trips abroad. Pupils also benefit from contact with French and Spanish native speakers in lessons. The use of ICT is severely limited because of the lack of appropriate subject specific software in the school and because access to computers is difficult. Accommodation is satisfactory but rooms are small and poorly ventilated. This restricts the range and variety of activities which can be provided, especially for large teaching groups.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising.

- Pupils do not always learn as much as they should in lessons because their work does not progress fast enough.
- The school now has a team of appropriately qualified teachers.
- Targets for pupils are not always realistic.

Commentary

101. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are higher and pupils achieve more. Teaching has improved because the subject is now taught by a team of appropriately qualified teachers who know how to teach the subject. The assessment system currently being introduced will inform pupils about the progress they are making and help teachers evaluate how well each topic has been taught. However, pupils still do not progress through the work quickly enough and there are still occasions when teachers are not aware of what pupils have already learnt.
102. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 appear better than those in 2003, which were below the national average. The trend over the last three years is slightly above the national trend of gradual improvement.
103. Test results in 2003 were not as good as those produced by pupils of similar prior attainment in other schools. Results in 2004 appear better and more in line with the standard of work expected.
104. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average when compared to those from all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade was very low. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-G grade was above average. When compared to results in schools with similar prior attainment, GCSE results were lower than might be expected overall. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was particularly low whilst the proportion gaining A*-G grades was higher than might be expected. When compared to results in similar 'secondary modern' schools the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was well above average but did not reflect the capabilities of these pupils. Boys gained proportionately fewer higher grades than did girls because they are not as careful and thorough with their work. More pupils got higher grades in GCSE in 2004 than in 2003 and the proportion was likely to be in line with what might be expected. The trend in results over the last three years is upwards because pupils are now being taught by specialist teachers.
105. Pupils had achieved below average standards on entry to the school. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average; pupils achieve satisfactorily. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other pupils because they play a full part in lessons. By Year 9, pupils can solve simple equations and calculate averages of a set of data. However, they cannot work out angles in geometric shapes.
106. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average; pupils achieve satisfactorily. There is no difference between the standards achieved by boys and those achieved by girls. All ethnic groups achieve equally. By Year 11, pupils can calculate the length of an arc of a circle and understand direct and indirect proportion. However, they cannot use a formula to solve a quadratic equation and are not confident to use significant figures. Although most pupils can read a question from a textbook, many have difficulty interpreting the instructions. Pupils frequently have difficulty explaining their work orally and are reluctant to write explanations. They listen attentively to their teacher but do not listen when a fellow pupil speaks to the class, so losing opportunities for critical analysis.
107. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because they are taught in smaller groups and the work matches their needs. Some teaching assistants make a good contribution to the learning of these pupils but in other instances, these assistants only help

one or two pupils when they could make a wider input. Individual education plans very rarely specifically address clear weaknesses in mathematics. The most able pupils make satisfactory progress because they are in groups where the work is more advanced but there are no additional activities to extend the learning of these pupils beyond the work undertaken by their classmates.

108. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In a good lesson, pupils in Year 7 learnt to justify their choice of statistics well because they were given a range of options and had to explain their selection to a partner. Careful, supporting questioning from the teacher helped pupils accept that there was more than one correct answer providing they could justify their choice. In contrast, in an unsatisfactory lesson for Year 9, nearly all pupils failed to learn as much as they should have done about compound areas because every pupil had to work at the same rate. This led to many pupils having nothing to do whilst they waited for others to finish. In approximately half of all lessons, pupils would learn more if teachers moved pupils on to the next stage of learning sooner. In Year 10, a good lesson saw pupils quickly being able to solve inequalities because the work developed skills at a good rate so that pupils moved on to the next stage of learning when they were ready without spending time on unnecessary repetition. In contrast, in an unsatisfactory lesson, another class of pupils in Year 10 did not learn anything new about angles because the teacher appeared unaware that they had already learnt this topic. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to their work. They behave well in class but do not recognise the need to work at a faster rate than they frequently undertake.
109. Assessment is satisfactory. Work is regularly marked but the quality of comment is inconsistent. Pupils are set targets for the year. Whilst these targets are realistically challenging for some pupils, they are undemanding for some whilst being virtually impossible for others.
110. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. A good team approach to the teaching of mathematics has been developed which supports teachers well. Insufficient use is currently made of data to analyse the performance of the subject to identify effective practice for dissemination or to tackle and weaker aspects. Topics from citizenship are occasionally covered in mathematics but pupils are not made aware that this is taking place. Opportunities to contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are frequently lost.

Mathematics across the curriculum

111. Pupils display levels of competency in mathematics below those generally found in most schools. In some subjects, these low standards adversely affect achievement. In design and technology, pupils have difficulty estimating quantities when cooking. Drawings for graphics are of poor quality because of lack of measuring skills. In ICT, pupils have difficulties using formulæ in a spreadsheet. In geography, pupils make errors when representing data in graphical form. In history, pupils handle data but cannot interpret it.
112. There is no co-ordinated approach to the development of mathematics across the curriculum. A pronounced example was noted in design and technology where some teachers used metric units whilst others used imperial measure. Pupils' mathematical skills would develop at a greater rate if more opportunities in subjects were identified in which pupils could practise and develop their skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and well behaved pupils enhance learning.
- National test and particularly GCSE examination results are improving.
- A well-led team of teachers are keen to raise pupils' achievement.
- Pupils are unsure of how to improve their work and do too little independent work
- There is insufficient use of ICT to assist both teaching and learning.

Commentary

113. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

114. In 2003, standards in end of Year 9 tests were well below the national average and below the average attained by pupils of similar prior attainment in other schools. Boys' results were relatively higher than those of girls. From 2002 the trend in results has been improving faster than national results, though keeping well below them.
115. The proportion of pupils who attained an A*-C grade at GCSE in 2003 was well below the national average whilst the proportion attaining an A*-G grade was 100 per cent, and above average. When compared with the results of pupils with similar prior attainment in other schools, the proportion of A*-C grades was still well below average. This picture improved significantly in 2004 and results are likely to be better than expected given pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9. Compared with similar secondary modern schools even the results in 2003 were above average but such a result does not represent sufficient achievement for pupils at this school. There is no clear difference between boys' and girls' results in the long term but in 2003 boys did less well at GCSE.
116. Standards of work are below average across all years and pupils' overall satisfactory achievement appears to be now rising thanks to good teaching and management. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as others normally and better when supported by a teaching assistant. In Year 9, pupils can remember facts such as the pH scale and where germs come from and explain processes such as energy transfer and cross-contamination by bacteria. However, their grasp of scientific ideas, such as energy cannot be created or destroyed, is less secure. In Year 11, lower attaining pupils are able to identify hydrocarbons from their formulae and can make molecular models of them. Higher attaining pupils can recall facts, such as electrons move to form an electric current which is measured in Amperes, and understand how to calculate electrical resistance. They are able to offer accurate scientific explanations when shown a range of phenomena using a Van der Graaff generator to produce static electricity.
117. Teaching and learning are good and pupils are making good progress in lessons. Teaching demonstrates several techniques that promote pupils' learning and achievement: For example, the prior learning of a Year 7 class was checked before starting on a new topic to avoid repeating work covered in primary school and some teachers use card games and scientific bingo that pupils enjoy to check learning, develop understanding and identify pupils' misconceptions. Lower attaining pupils learn well in classes that proceed in small steps, use text they can read easily and provide extensive individual help; literacy is well developed in many classes by requiring pupils to write in their own words, read aloud, use key words in context and look up words in a dictionary. Pupils are taught to draw graphs properly and provide a title and label the axes. Work is often well marked with helpful comments. There are also weaknesses in teaching which hold back learning and achievement; ICT is insufficiently used for teaching and learning, partly due to lack of access to computers. Pupils are also vague about their academic targets and how to improve their work and pupils' independent learning is not well developed; they need to read and research more for themselves.
118. Leadership and management are good. Assessment data is well used by teachers to set academic target levels for whole classes and individual pupils and to identify underachievers. Departmental meetings are well used to discuss improvements to the curriculum and how standards can be raised. Monitoring, evaluation and review of the department are, however, limited. The introduction of separate science subjects at GCSE is serving the needs of higher attaining pupils well. Additional activities such as revision classes and tutorials help raise pupils' achievement.
119. The department has a good range of subject specialist teachers qualified in biology, chemistry and physics and staff are keen to raise standards. Given the recent new build it is unfortunate that science laboratories are located awkwardly, services, such as water and drainage, are provided to limited specifications, furniture is of low quality and storage and preparation areas

inadequate. Neither has ICT been appropriately integrated. The working conditions for the science technicians are unsatisfactory and their safety is compromised: there is insufficient preparation space, the rooms are inadequately ventilated and they lack natural light.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- Standards are well below average at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Discrete ICT provision in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient to meet statutory requirements, particularly for those pupils not following the GCSE course.
- Current achievement in Years 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory.
- There is a clear vision, drive and determination from the newly appointed subject head and a team of specialist staff has been established.
- Very good teaching in Year 11 is improving pupils' achievement.
- Assessment is being effectively used and providing good guidance for improvement though this practice is not consistent at present.

Commentary

120. Improvement in ICT provision since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. However, it is clear that improvement is now taking place. Issues from the last inspection are now being systematically tackled due to the appointment of a new head of department and new senior management.
121. Standards in Year 9 are well below average. 2003 GCSE results were well below average and provisional 2004 GCSE results indicate a further fall in standards. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are well below average overall, the standard of girls' work is lower than that of boys'.
122. Standards of work in Years 7, 10 and 11 are improving. Pupils' achievement overall in Years 8 and 9 remains unsatisfactory due to historical staffing and management problems; in Year 7 and in Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The lack of confidence displayed by girls using computers contributes to their underachievement and to work of a lower standard than that of boys. Word processing helps pupils to improve their literacy and their numeracy skills are reinforced through regular use of data and formulas. However, immature approaches to style and layout, underdeveloped keyboard skills, limited knowledge and understanding of systems and underdeveloped interpretation of data, hinder learning, notably in Years 7 to 9.
123. Teaching is good in all years with some very good teaching in Year 11. A settled and committed team of specialist teachers use their expertise well to raise confidence and teach new skills. Pupils' interest in new work is helping them learn. In the most successful lessons, effective use is made of assessment which provides good guidance to pupils as to how to extend their skills. Learning is helped by opportunities outside lessons for pupils to use computers and through the effective use of a skilled ICT technician.
124. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed head of department has quickly established a clear vision for the subject. The school recognises the need to raise ICT standards quickly. This is evident in the rolling out of the national strategy in Year 7, 8 and 9. The ICT development plan is well focused on raising achievement and developing staff

competence to accelerate the pace of learning. However, criteria for success, time scales and costings need to be more robust.

125. There has been significant investment in accommodation and resources since the previous inspection. Computer provision is better than the national average. Nevertheless, resources still fall short of that required to secure substantial improvements in standards. No interactive whiteboards are installed in any specialist rooms and there is a narrow range of peripheral equipment. In addition, a lack of ventilation or air conditioning plus inappropriate seating makes it harder than it should be for pupils to concentrate.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

126. ICT is inconsistently used as an aid to teaching across curriculum areas. Computer rooms and dedicated facilities in curriculum areas provide opportunities for pupils to use computers outside lessons. Pupils have satisfactory access to the Internet and its use is effectively monitored. A small number of interactive whiteboards have been installed in classrooms but their use is underdeveloped and current staff training is inadequate. Teaching of ICT skills in most curriculum areas is insufficiently developed. Few subject areas assess pupils' ICT skills and there is little tracking or monitoring of how their skills develop. In design and technology the use of computer-assisted design and manufacturing is underdeveloped and hinders pupils' achievements; sports coaching makes good use of specialist computer software to analyse video recordings of pupils' performances to help them raise standards. Due to inconsistency of use and insufficient discrete teaching, provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements.
127. ICT makes a sound contribution to the provision for pupils with special educational needs through the use of a dedicated computer suite running software for them to practise and improve literacy and numeracy skills. Good access to this suite is provided for pupils before and after school. This well run facility is also used to extend the learning of more able pupils in Years 7 to 11 through a referral system used in mathematics and English.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average and are not high enough.
- Many pupils underachieve due to too much variation in teaching and assessment.
- Pupils' weak recall and retention of prior learning in Years 7 to 9 hinder their progress.
- Good extra-curricular opportunities and support are provided, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

128. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory; standards of work are now lower and pupils' achievement weaker.
129. GCSE results in 2003 were well below the average compared with all schools. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was low. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-G grades was just below average. Boys did better than girls. When compared with their other GCSE subjects within the school, pupils' geography results were very low. The 2004 results showed a similar pattern and further decline. However, a 'fast-track' GCSE group of Year 10 girls performed well.

130. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory; there is insufficient improvement overall to lead to satisfactory achievement and too much variation exists in the quality, amount and type of work in pupils' books between classes. The progress of high attainers is unsatisfactory due to insufficient challenge. Pupils with special educational needs, when given specialist assistance, progress satisfactorily. By Year 9, pupils have a basic grounding in geographical skills. Most use maps satisfactorily but much more practice is needed in the accurate presentation and analyses of statistical data. Pupils have a very weak understanding of spatial patterns and knowledge of location. By Year 11, standards are still well below average, but are much higher, though below average, in the current Year 10. While pupils' achievement overall in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory, many pupils in the current Year 10 are very well motivated and progress well. The best independent study projects for GCSE are of a good standard. However, pupils need to prepare better for GCSE examinations.
131. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall as, currently, pupils most often make satisfactory progress in their lessons. Both teaching and learning are better in Years 10 and 11 when teaching is by subject specialists. Teachers' management of pupils is usually very good and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Most lessons have a good structure but the aims need more precisely to identify the knowledge, understanding and skills pupils are expected to learn. Often insufficient time is taken to place the lesson in its geographical context and to consolidate fully previous learning. Learning is not always as good as teaching as it is severely hindered by pupils' poor recall and retention of prior learning and, likely shared teaching in recent years. Learning in Years 7 to 9 is limited by not enough use of local Ordnance Survey maps and atlases. When teaching is practical in form and visual aids clarify the aims, as in a very good Year 10 lesson, learning is noticeably better. Pupils' literacy is soundly developed but their numeracy is weak. Difficulty of access to ICT has prevented computers being used as they should be to help teaching and learning. Fieldwork undertaken provides very effective learning and stimulates pupils' interest in the subject. Contributions to pupils' personal development, including moral and cultural, and to citizenship education are good but need to be identified explicitly for pupils in lessons. Displays in the classroom are of very high quality and make for a pleasant learning environment.
132. Leadership and management are satisfactory despite overall underachievement as a number of good initiatives are evident, including a good extra-curricular programme, a fast-track GCSE group in Year 10 and additional support sessions for pupils in Year 11. However, there is need for greater emphasis on raising achievement in Years 7 to 9. There are inconsistencies in the approach to, and in the standards of, teaching and assessment, including day-to-day marking.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching motivates pupils well so they show a desire to learn.
- Very effective class management and good relationships promote good learning.
- The scheme for assessing pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9 does not lead to accurate assessment.
- The marking of work in Years 10 and 11 does not give pupils a clear enough understanding of their GCSE attainment.

Commentary

133. In Year 9, pupils' attainment is below that expected nationally. A small proportion reach above average standards. Pupils begin Year 7 with attainment below what is expected

nationally. Many begin well below. They achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. In individual lessons many sometimes achieve well, when the work is sufficiently stimulating. They are motivated by the work set by their teachers and want to know more. In some lessons, however, the lowest attainers do not achieve as well as they should because the language in the textbooks is too complex.

134. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 have sound knowledge about the past. They usually recall adequately work done in previous lessons so that teachers can quickly move on to new work. Most see and understand the reasons for past events. The highest attainers use sources satisfactorily for information and to make deductions, but the lowest attainers struggle to understand much beyond simple information in a source. This is usually because their basic literacy is weak.
135. GCSE results in 2003 at grades A*-C were well below the national average for all schools. The results in 2004 were higher than 2003, especially for boys. Standards reflect reasonably well the capabilities of pupils who opted to take the subject, most of whom began the GCSE course with below average standards. In 2003, some pupils did not achieve as well as they should have done. The reasons for this have been investigated by the department and appropriate actions taken.
136. The standard of current work is below the standard expected nationally, although a small proportion is above. The majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily overall and in lessons because teachers expect them to work hard and set suitable tasks. Occasionally, pupils do not achieve as well as they might because teachers assume too much prior knowledge and move on without ensuring pupils really do understand. Sometimes higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged through probing questions.
137. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have sound knowledge of the topics they are studying. They explain why events have happened. The higher attainers make valid deductions from historical sources and use correct terminology appropriately. The knowledge of the lowest attainers is frequently very patchy. Their poor literacy levels restrict their ability to use historical sources with any competence.
138. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The best teaching in Years 7 to 9 is characterised by a brisk and lively approach which creates interest amongst pupils. This was seen especially in a very good lesson on life in the trenches in World War 1, in which pupils learned a great deal in a short time. The lessons in Years 10 and 11, although well-focused, are less lively and stimulating. In all years, teachers manage pupils very well, using friendly relationships to create a purposeful learning atmosphere. Pupils respond well to their teachers; clearly most pupils enjoy lessons and work with enthusiasm. Teachers ensure pupils are clear about what they are asked to do, and end the lessons with a short summary, in which pupils are asked to write down what they have learned. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers frequently check pupils' learning in lessons.
139. The scheme for assessing pupils' overall standards at the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory and is leading to very inaccurate assessments. It is a weakness the department must deal with quickly. The work done by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not marked to GCSE standards often enough to ensure that pupils know how well they are doing from the beginning of the course.
140. The department is managed satisfactorily and led well. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection in introducing fieldwork and using ICT. The commitment to improve standards can be seen in the decision to discard coursework as part of the GCSE examination, and in the implementation of the national strategy to improve teaching and learning, which is clearly evident in lessons. Pupils still do not use ICT often enough in class time because the department lacks computers for pupils' use and cannot always book central

facilities at suitable times.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are generally good with some lessons being very good or excellent.
- Standards in all years are below expectations and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not get sufficient time for religious education to allow the requirements of the Wirral Agreed Syllabus to be met.
- The subject is now making a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

141. Improvement in this subject since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because standards have declined and the issue of providing enough time for religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 remains unresolved. However, there has been very good improvement in some of the other shortcomings detailed in the previous report. Specifically, dramatic improvements have been made to the poor behaviour and attitudes and unchallenging lessons, which were all remarked upon at the time of the last inspection.
142. Pupils arrive in Year 7 with a diversity of prior experience of religious education but generally with levels of knowledge and understanding lower than those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have been enthused by their study of religion, and are making good progress. Similarly, pupils in other year groups are also now making good progress in lessons, but appear to have learned little during their previous time at the school. Thus standards are below expectations for all pupils, and their achievement over time is unsatisfactory.
143. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, a barrier to higher standards and achievement is the timetable arrangement that has them doing religious education in a carousel arrangement with other subjects. This results in pupils receiving rather less than half the time necessary for them to cover the material required by the locally agreed syllabus. Consequently, standards are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. The new senior management of the school has undertaken to make necessary changes to the curriculum for the next academic year.
144. Teaching and learning are good. Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils, and amongst the pupils, encourage an atmosphere where open and purposeful discussions lead to pupils developing their skills of argument and analysis. A range of teaching methods is employed to enhance learning for pupils with different learning needs. In an excellent Year 9 lesson seen, the teacher utilised well-chosen clips of video and music, and newspaper reports – rewritten to be appropriate to the reading skills of the pupils – to engage all pupils. In this lesson, sensitive and difficult issues were discussed by the pupils in a mature and sophisticated way. The lesson enhanced literacy skills whilst also contributing significantly to pupils' personal development. Lessons are thoroughly and carefully planned and good use is made of learning resources. The only lesson seen that did not meet the high standards of others was taught by a supply teacher.
145. Assessment of pupils' attainment is at an early stage of development. Innovative and effective assessment procedures are being introduced and pupils are responding very well to them. However, pupils are not yet clear as to the objectives of the subject and what they need to do to attain highly in it. Marking is encouraging but is not yet always sufficiently specific as to what pupils need to do to improve in terms of the skills specific to this subject.
146. Leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. Both teachers of the subject are committed to its development, with the more experienced of the two supporting

the development of a newly qualified teacher who was appointed as head of department in September.

Both are knowledgeable, specialist teachers of the subject and they share a vision of how it should develop. Rigorous departmental self-evaluation has yet to be developed, hampered in part by a lack of information about pupils' previous attainment.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but lesson planning does not provide sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities and does not foster independent thinking.
- Standards are well below average across all years and pupils' graphic skills lack accuracy and maturity and hinder all aspects of design development.
- The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory but it is satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory and not enough attention is given to raising standards of teaching and extending pupils' learning.
- Insufficient use is made of computer-aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacture (CAM) to improve the accuracy, presentation and finish of work.

Commentary

147. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards remain too low and weak graphic skills, limited use of ICT and superficial knowledge and understanding continue to hinder pupils' learning. While accommodation has been improved significantly with rebuilding, outstanding health and safety issues require urgent action.
148. On entry to the school, pupils have a variable range of technological experiences and skills which are, overall, well below average. Standards of work seen in Year 9 remain well below average and pupils achieve unsatisfactorily. However, pupils have a clear interest in the subject and have confidence in handling tools and equipment. There are no significant differences in achievement across the range of ability of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils' graphic techniques are weak and hinder their generation of ideas. Their knowledge of general materials and their properties is superficial and pupils have very little knowledge of modern or smart materials. Literacy skills of listening, speaking and writing are insufficiently extended to support the gaining of knowledge. There is no consolidated approach in the use of CAM to shape, form and finish materials safely and accurately. CAD is not used enough to help raise standards.
149. Standards in 2003 GCSE in food, resistant materials and graphic products are below average with the performance of girls significantly below, and boys below that of their attainments in other school subjects. Provisional 2004 GCSE results, whilst showing improvements, reveal a similar pattern of underperformance. This represents barely satisfactory achievement. Double award 2004 GCSE vocational engineering results, timetabled in collaboration with the Laird Foundation, reveal a poor performance with almost half the entry unclassified. Clearly many of the candidates were inappropriately enrolled on the course and this remains the case for the current Year 10. Coursework folios reveal a grasp of the design process and sound standards of presentation in food technology pupils do demonstrate safe practices when handling, machinery. Pupils' analytical thinking is shallow and there is too little testing and in-depth evaluation of prototypes and final products. ICT is not used well enough as an aid to learning

and to present design work. This is evident in research when too many pupils rely on catalogue cut outs rather than, for example, edited and annotated Internet sourced materials.

150. While teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and teachers' subject knowledge is good, expectations are not high enough. Lessons are thoughtfully planned around a core of knowledge and well organised, particularly in food. However, challenging questions are not asked frequently enough and at a brisk enough pace to ensure knowledge is systematically consolidated and understanding extended. In Years 7 to 9, expectations of behaviour fall short of those required to prevent immature behaviour, mainly from boys, hindering lesson pace and compromising practical working. Lesson planning is weak at providing appropriately difficult tasks to individuals and is not sharp enough to motivate pupils to contribute and develop their own ideas. Teachers' assessment is good and consistently undertaken; pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve. However, the standards of work across different material areas in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently moderated and teachers' similar assessments can mean different things.
151. Despite good day-to-day organisation and teamwork, leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is an insufficiently strong focus on strategies to raise standards of teaching and learning and tackling underachievement. Monitoring and evaluation of classroom performance are not rigorous enough. No policies or successful good practice guidance are in place to help teachers raise standards in literacy, numeracy or ICT. Health and safety risk assessments are incomplete, not adapted to suit school situations, and are not scrutinised as part of a whole-school monitoring. Pupils benefit from good learning support from the food technician when they are cooking but time allocation for technical support in all areas is inadequate.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is excellent.
- Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make excellent progress.
- Pupils gain well above average results in GCSE examinations.
- Very good displays of work enhance the school environment.
- Provision for ICT is minimal.

Commentary

152. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 gain excellent results in teacher assessments. Very high standards are evident in work seen during the inspection and reflect the excellent quality of teaching and learning.
153. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average compared with those in all schools; the proportion of pupils gaining an A*-C grade was well above average with a large proportion of pupils, particularly girls, gaining very high A and B grades. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, in some instances gaining above average GCSE grades due to teaching which is very sensitive to individual needs. For the same reason, gifted pupils achieve their full potential. Girls' results are better than those of boys, girls in the main showing better levels of commitment and concentration in class. Results in 2004 were similar to those in 2003. The trend in results over the last two years has been of sustained excellent achievement and well above average standards.
154. Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are very high and achievement is excellent; pupils have particular strengths in pictorial composition. By Year 9, pupils are able to work confidently in a

range of media and to use work of major artists in developing their ideas due to the very well thought out and carefully planned sequence of lessons. These break down creative work into a form of knowledge which can be taught and learned. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average and achievement remains excellent. In work seen during the inspection, pupils showed a good capacity for working independently and marshalling their ideas in a thoughtful way. They bring to their work knowledge of basic skills in the use of colour and composition together with a sense of purpose. This approach stems directly from a similar approach in teaching.

155. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. All lessons are very thoroughly prepared and supervised. Appropriate stress is placed upon clear analysis of tasks set, and the importance of a workmanlike attitude is emphasised. Pupils' ideas are respected by their teachers and, against this background, pupils develop creative self-confidence. The standard of presentation of the work displayed around the school illustrates the degree of care taken in its production. Pupils are able to build imaginatively upon this foundation. A good example is the way pupils have used the distinctive work of Roy Lichtenstein as a model for posters relating to school situations. Assessment practice is very good and is used to inform planning.
156. In one very good Year 10 lesson, pupils were encouraged to use a computer program to give expression to their portrait studies. This provided a dual challenge in the development of an understanding of ICT applied to art and the development of expressive portrait work. An excellent Year 7 lesson successfully introduced pupils to techniques for improving and recording their observations.
157. Leadership and management of the subject area are excellent. Staff work in harmony, with shared aims and a high level of enthusiasm for their subject; all staff share in the monitoring of teaching. Resources are carefully husbanded and comprehensive documentation drawn up for all whole-school policies. Schemes of work are constructed well and are under continuous review. The use of ICT is restricted by limited resources but, where used, it is used effectively.
158. The department is housed in three well-lit, well-furnished studios with good provision for ceramics, including a kiln room. The work of the department is aided by a very capable studio technician.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 because of good teaching.
- Subject practice across lessons taken by different teachers is sometimes inconsistent.
- Good leadership has improved subject provision and pupils' opportunities since the previous inspection.
- A significant minority of pupils enters Year 10 with low performing skills which restrict their progress.

Commentary

159. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Most of the future developments indicated in the previous report have been realised. Pupils now enjoy a better curriculum in Years 7 to 9, a GCSE course is well established for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and there is a greater range of musical activities outside of lessons, with increased participation by pupils.

160. Pupils' standards of attainment on entry are below average, with a significant minority well below average. By Year 9, standards are average, with more capable pupils moving towards standards which are above average. Achievement overall is good. Standards by Year 11 are

also average; a small number of talented pupils are above average. However the wide range of capabilities, particularly in Year 10, together with the low level of performing skills of a significant minority of pupils, mean that achievement overall is satisfactory rather than good.

161. Recent GCSE results reflect this varied capability, with a wide range of grades. Entries historically have been small, and in the last three years, pupils have gained a creditable 100 per cent A* - G pass rate. Music is now proving a more popular choice in Year 10, but does not always attract the most musically capable pupils. A significant minority of pupils does not learn to play an instrument or is at a very early stage of learning. This restricts their progress, not only in performing and musical theory, but also in realising their creative ideas in composing. Their keyboard technique is not sufficiently developed by the end of Year 9 to help to address this deficiency.

162. Teaching is good overall and in each key stage. It is occasionally very good in Years 7 to 9. Some non-specialist teaching is more varied but never less than satisfactory. The best teaching is well managed, promoting very good subject ethos and good behaviour. The pace, challenge and range of activities reinforce and consolidate good learning. In satisfactory lessons, rigour, pace and behaviour management are sometimes inconsistent. When this happens, pupils' learning lags slightly behind teaching. Learning is also sometimes slightly behind teaching in Years 10 and 11 because of the wide range of capabilities in the increasing number of pupils choosing the subject.

163. Extra sessions are available for pupils to improve their attainment but records show that some pupils who most need them do not attend. However, pupils' generally good attitudes, co-operative behaviour and enthusiasm contribute to their learning and they mostly enjoy the subject. Good use of ICT music programs in Years 10 and 11 supports composing development and improves its presentation but there is insufficient use of ICT in Years 7 to 9. Tasks are adaptable for pupils with special educational needs, who also have good support from teachers and from other pupils when they work in pairs. Good examples of tasks stretching identified talented pupils were also seen.

164. Assessment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is systematic and works satisfactorily in practice, although not all pupils are always completely sure what they have to do to gain higher grades. Academic targets for pupils in Years 10 and 11, which are based on their prior achievement and not further moderated, are sometimes unhelpful as they do not take into account pupils' talents, or lack of talent, in music.

165. Leadership and management are both good overall. Management is efficient, particularly as currently the curriculum leader has considerable additional responsibilities as an assistant headteacher. However, the subject development plan, while identifying the raising of attainment as a priority, is not sufficiently focused on the specific aspects and monitoring of teaching and learning which will promote them.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well by Years 9 and 11 in the compulsory course as a result of good teaching.

- Very good leadership and good management provide a purposeful focus, ethos and direction for the subject.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils result in a very positive atmosphere in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- Very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year extends pupils' learning experiences and personal development.
- The quality of extra provision as a result of the school's Sports College status is very good.

Commentary

166. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The positive aspects mentioned in the previous report have been maintained and timetable issues resolved. As a result of the school attaining Sports College status in 2001 and new buildings opened in 2003, indoor facilities have greatly improved, as has the number of specialist staff in the department. The breadth of courses on offer has greatly improved, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.
167. GCSE results in 2003 were broadly in line with the national average with pupils achieving well in the subject compared to most others. Just over a tenth of the year group took the examination. The higher number of boys taking the course does not make it possible to comment on gender differences. The trend in results, prior to 2003, had been one of improvement but provisional results in 2004 show a decline. Small groups of girls have continued to take the GCSE dance course and provisional results for 2004 show that half the group attained A* to C grade passes. Insufficient evidence was gathered during the inspection to enable comments to be made on standards of work seen and the achievements of pupils in the GCSE Physical education and dance option groups.
168. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average; pupils achieve well by Year 9 in relation to their below average standards on entry to the school. By Year 9 all groups of pupils have acquired a range of individual skills and are able to apply these in a range of activities. In basketball, for example, many boys have secure close control skills and change of direction when dribbling. In dance, most girls have a secure knowledge and understanding of a range of choreographic devices but the application of these in performance is not always consistent. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average in the compulsory course; all groups of pupils achieve well and have continued to build on the skills and techniques learned in Years 7 to 9. Across all years, pupils have developed well their understanding of the principles and procedures for warm up, the quality of older pupils' work being particularly effective.
169. Teaching and learning are good. Learning objectives are made clear at the start of lessons, thus pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers have a good command of activities being taught and have consistent high expectations as regards behaviour and discipline and in the ability of pupils to work to their best. In consequence, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, enhancing the quality of their learning and promoting a very good atmosphere in lessons. Teachers' effective breakdown and demonstration of skills, for example, in a Year 7 GCSE gymnastics lesson, ensured pupils understood further what was expected of them. Lessons are well structured, purposeful and provide for progression and challenge. Effective use of questioning, for example, in a Year 7 skills acquisition lesson, enhanced pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as enabling teachers to gauge the level of pupils' understanding.
170. Pupils are involved in pair and small group work but there are sometimes missed chances for them to be involved in structured observation of others' work. This would deepen their understanding further and help them modify and develop their own practice. There is, however, effective use of ICT to support pupils' learning. In a Year 11 basketball lesson, for example, both teachers used digital cameras to enable pupils to identify their own strengths and weaknesses whilst practising shooting techniques. Teachers circulate well and effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes pupils aware of their capabilities and what they

need to do to improve. GCSE theory work is regularly marked and there are useful comments made as to what pupils need to do to improve. Generally, effective plenary discussion at the end of lessons enables pupils to consolidate what they have learned but sometimes teachers tend to provide all the evaluation rather than seeking pupils' views as to what they have learned.

171. Very good leadership and good management provide a purposeful focus and direction for the subject in order to improve standards. There is a strong team ethos and a shared commitment to improve provision. Development planning is effective. New curricular arrangements are not yet fully embedded in Years 10 and 11, nor are arrangements for moderation and standardisation of assessment at the end of Year 9.
172. Very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year, including both recreational and competitive fixtures, extends pupils' learning opportunities and personal development. During the previous school year, 35 per cent of boys and 41 per cent of girls represented the school in competitive fixtures and tournaments. As a result of the commitment of physical education teachers, a number of teams have recently been successful in district competitions. Individuals have attained representative honours at district and regional levels in a range of sports and one pupil has attained national representative honours.
173. The school became a specialist Sports College in 2001; this has greatly improved the quality of sporting provision. All pupils have two hours of quality physical education provision per week. In Years 10 and 11, pupils now follow accredited courses including, for example, GCSE Physical education, BTEC courses and the junior sports leaders' award (JSLA) course. Post-16 students have the opportunity to take part in two hours of planned recreational physical activity per week as well as the opportunity to take accredited courses. The department hosts the local schools' sports partnership (SSP) scheme and has embraced the wider Physical Education School Sport and Club Links Strategy (PESSCL). As a result, there are established links with local community sporting organisations that are of direct benefit to pupils.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

174. Two **business studies** lessons were seen, one in Year 10 and one in Year 11. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. Relationships are good and effective use is made of computers. Pupils behave very well and show good application to their studies. As a result, pupils made satisfactory gains in learning about how to produce a logo, letterhead and business card, and how to plan a business trip.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership has recently established a good revised programme for personal, social, and health education and citizenship.
- The very good scheme of work meets requirements well, but allocated time does not ensure adequate coverage and depth.
- There are good citizenship focus days and opportunities outside lessons but citizenship delivered through other subjects is patchy and not sufficiently explicit.
- Teaching and learning in dedicated lessons are inconsistent and do not always develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding as well as they might.

Commentary

175. A new, very good scheme of work meets national requirements and promises to develop pupils' confidence and personal development. However, the time allocated to lessons has not been increased to ensure adequate subject coverage and depth. There is a simple but effective assessment system based on pupils' expected levels of attainment. Staffing changes

have caused the school to be some 18 months behind most others in citizenship provision and there has not been sufficient time for changes made to provision to make as positive an impact on standards as they will.

176. Six lessons dedicated to personal, social and health education and citizenship were seen, in Years 7 to 9 and in Year 11. Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 were below average, as pupils have had little time yet to benefit from the new curriculum. Standards are closer to average in Year 11, where pupils' greater maturity supports better attainment. Pupils made satisfactory progress in most lessons and achievement overall is satisfactory.
177. There is patchy coverage of aspects of citizenship through other subjects and, where it does occur, it is not sufficiently explicit; pupils are not made aware of the citizenship aspects arising in their work. For example, in some very good lessons in history and in religious education, work was very well related to citizenship development but it was not made clear to pupils.
178. Special focus lessons and whole days are a successful feature of the citizenship and personal and social education programme of work. One presentation on 'choices' had a strong impact on the whole of Year 9. The school makes good use of visiting specialists. In addition, pupils can extend their experience through the school council and a range of community and charitable activities.
179. Non-specialist teachers, who have no formal training in the subject, teach citizenship. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, ranging from good to unsatisfactory despite the carefully prepared common lesson plans. In a few lessons, learning lags behind teaching because of younger pupils' inexperience with the new subject. The best teaching opens pupils' minds to different points of view and encourages them to discuss and debate them in a structured and focused way, often resulting in reconciliation. This supports pupils' knowledge and understanding and develops their personal skills. In some lessons, pupils are restricted by teaching which is too closed, by material which they cannot fully understand and engage with, or by unfocused discussion without outcomes or resolution. However, pupils generally enjoy lessons even if they sometimes make less progress than they could.
180. Leadership is good. The newly appointed co-ordinator has completely revised the subject programme for personal social and health education and has incorporated the programmes of study for citizenship, which is now established well within the curriculum. She has relevant specialist training, but this has not been formally passed on to other teachers. Statutory requirements for sex and relationships education and drugs education are met and delivered by visiting specialists. Management is satisfactory, as formal monitoring and review of provision, and especially of the consistency of teaching and learning, have not commenced yet.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003 if five or more students completed the course.

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
Biology	14	14.3	65.2	0.0	11.1	3.6	20.6
Chemistry	13	23.1	72.7	0.0	13.9	5.0	20.6
Physical education	7	14.3	73.2	0.0	11.4	4.0	20.1
Physics	6	17.0	68.6	0.0	14.4	3.0	18.9
Other social studies	7	0.0	69.7	0.0	16.7	0.0	24.1
History	5	1000	80.7	0.0	19.5	28.0	24.3
Total* includes subjects with less than 5 entrants in school	66	27.3	73.9	0.0	17.4	9.4	26.3

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
Biology	5	80.0	96.4	0.0	39.2	44.0	78.6
Business studies	5	100.0	98.7	20.0	36.8	76.0	80.1
Total* includes subjects with less than 5 entrants in school	29	96.6	97.7	6.9	42.1	59.3	81.9
Business VCE	6	33.3	65.0	0.0	14.6	16.7	60.1
Total	6	33.3	n/a	0.0	n/a	16.7	85.5

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature

Provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good but students typically underachieve in examinations.
- Students' knowledge of the technical aspects of the English language is poor and they also lack general knowledge of literature.
- Standards of students' work on starting the sixth form are below and sometimes well below average.

Commentary

181. Standards of work are well below average overall. Pupils enter the sixth form with skills which are well below those generally expected at this level and have limited success in examinations. There were too few A-Level entrants in 2003 for a full analysis but there were no A or B grades. A-Level results in 2002 were well below average. AS Level results in 2003 cannot be analysed; AS results in 2002 were below average. School results in 2004 cannot be interpreted as national data is not yet available but they appear to show a little improvement.
182. Achievement is unsatisfactory overall as students typically do not do as well in examinations as they might. This is mostly due to their lack of literacy skills and lack of general or specific knowledge about literature when they start the course. However, current students do make good progress in lessons
183. Teaching and learning are good overall. The standard of discussion in Year 13 is impeded by the low attainment of students and has often to be interrupted by explanation of technical language and basic general knowledge. In a Year 12 lesson, the standard of discussion was more in line with normal expectations but was punctuated by reinforcement of some basic understanding of the English language for the lower attainers in the group. Small group work enabled all students to progress at an appropriate pace for their specific needs.
184. The new head of department has had little time to improve the quality of provision for the sixth form and consequently leadership and management of English in the sixth form have not been judged. In discussion, it is appreciated that most students who opt for English literature would do better studying more appropriate post-16 courses. This is seen as a priority for the next academic year both by the head of department and by the school. There is clear understanding of the limitations of students opting for English literature and support is provided to assist them in their studies. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory; examination results then indicated good achievement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

Provision to raise standards in English and generally improve literacy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory in most subject areas. The situation in the main school is duplicated in the sixth form. Where there is good provision in main school subjects, this is maintained where post-16 courses are offered. There is no provision for key skills in the sixth form which is detrimental to all subjects.

MATHEMATICS

185. A small Year 12 **mathematics** AS class began in September 2004 but it was not possible to see it during the inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

186. Students have standards of mathematics which are well below those generally found in a sixth form. In biology, students' achievement is restricted by these low standards because they have difficulty with calculations required to analyse data. In business studies, students handle the mathematical elements of the course but need considerable assistance from their teachers to help them do so.
187. The school does not offer any course to develop the mathematical skills of all sixth form students. Doing so would significantly help students prepare for higher education and employment. Such a course would also contribute to raising achievement in many of the courses offered in the sixth form.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent examination results show poor achievement, though current students are making satisfactory progress.
- Standards are well below average.
- Students have been reluctant to engage in independent learning but current students appear more committed.

Commentary

188. Results for both A-level and AS-level in 2003 were well below average; there were no grades above D and the majority of AS candidates failed to get a grade. Results in 2004 were worse; only three of the nine A-level candidates got a grade, none better than D, and all the AS candidates failed to obtain a grade. In both years, achievement was poor. Students enter the sixth form with low grades in GCSE and few study other science subjects that would help them achieve better. Teachers say that students in the past have been reluctant to carry out the necessary reading and research required to reach required standards. Current students seem committed; homework is handed in promptly, a higher proportion want to proceed to A-level biology and some want to take up careers in applied biology.
189. There are no students currently studying A-level biology. Standards of work at AS are well below average; students' achievement at this early stage of the course is satisfactory. Students join in oral work but are less good at committing their thoughts to paper. They understand the digestive processes well but struggle to distinguish between the biological molecules protein, carbohydrate and lipids because their knowledge of chemistry is weak.
190. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is satisfactory overall; teachers have good subject knowledge and use it to set students appropriate challenges. Learning is unsatisfactory overall; teachers have to spend much time developing students' basic skills such as note taking and also their general scientific knowledge.
191. Biology is well led and managed by the two teachers involved who work well together to ensure students benefit from their complementary expertise. They try hard to motivate and support students and make them constantly aware of the standards required by the examination. They arrange visits to broaden students' horizons, for example to learn about forensic science. Students are appreciative of the teachers' support. This subject was not reported on at the time of the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student achievement is satisfactory.
- There is not enough variety in teaching methods and resources.
- Essays are set and marked conscientiously but students' notes are not extensive.

Commentary

192. Students' prior attainment is below average. Both male and female students' achievement is satisfactory. In 2004, the results in the AS and newly established A2 examinations were similar to the AS results in 2003, which were below average. The standards of work seen during the inspection are also below average, but better in Year 12 than in Year 13. Students have a better grasp of social facts and standard explanations than of social theory and research methods, and the most talented students are not always sufficiently extended.
193. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is based on very good knowledge of the subject and examination requirements. Probing questioning is used skilfully to involve and engage students who are encouraged by regular praise. However, the range of teaching methods is narrow with insufficient use of teaching resources. Lessons sometimes lack a coherent structure or sharp objectives, and in Year 13, theoretical ideas are not routinely linked to the main sociological perspectives. Teacher-student relationships are consistently good and students' attitudes are positive. They receive good quality help and support when they have difficulties and they contribute well when answering and discussing sociological questions. They have ample opportunities for extended essay writing and to answer past examination questions but their notes are not extensive or well enough organised as a source for revision. Essays are not word processed and there are few opportunities to use ICT for research or to extend learning. Students take part in external conferences but there are not enough opportunities, particularly for the most talented students, to conduct independent enquiry.
194. The use of assessment is satisfactory. From the outset, students have clear targets to aim at and homework is set and marked conscientiously. However, the emphasis on praise and encouragement results in overgenerous marking and Year 13 students do not have a clear idea of how well they are doing or what they need to do to achieve their targets.
195. The subject is popular and it builds effectively on the GCSE available in Years 10 and 11.
196. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a determination to improve and a rigorous approach to prospective students meeting the minimum entry requirements needed for later success. Available data is analysed but self-evaluation is not searching enough to inform prioritisation and action planning. This subject was not reported on at the time of the last inspection.

BUSINESS

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good command of the subject.
- The courses offered vary and are matched to students' needs.
- The number of students varies from one year to the next, making planning difficult.
- There are too few links with local businesses to enhance the curriculum.

Commentary

197. Standards are below average. In 2004, the examination results in the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) full award in business were in line with students' prior attainment. All five students achieved a pass grade. Four of the five students entered for the AVCE (single award) in business passed, again in line with students' prior attainment.

Students do not attain the highest grades. Small numbers of students on other courses had varied success but most passed

198. Provision is very flexible. The number of students taking examinations varies from year to year. The courses offered also vary from year to year depending on the needs of the students. Both factors make planning difficult. When appropriate, students are entered for AS-level (as in the case of this year's Year 12 students) or A-level.
199. Standards of current work are below average but pupils achieve satisfactorily. Work seen lacks depth, and students do not reach the required standards in independent research, analysis and interpretation. However, students benefit from the very good support from their teachers who monitor progress and help them improve their understanding. Some students do not work hard enough, failing to complete set tasks, including essential homework. Others are very motivated, exhibiting maturity and responding to the particular challenges of working in small classes.
200. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. The ethos for learning is comfortable. Students benefit from their teachers' very good subject knowledge. Often students work at their own pace on coursework, with teacher support as appropriate. Students draw too heavily on their teachers' expertise. More needs to be done to challenge the thinking of students through the use of more varied methods in lessons. Lesson objectives are insufficiently rigorous and some students are not productive enough, with too few written, paired or group tasks. There are not enough links with local businesses and industries to provide a context for learning which means learning is more abstract than it need be and the practical uses of business skills are not clearly demonstrated.
201. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Management of the different courses is good. The subject co-ordinator approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. She has been successful in developing a strong team approach and is well supported by two other teachers, both of whom are specialists. Accommodation is good and there is good access to resources to support learning, including computers. This subject was not reported on in the previous inspection.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision in health and social care is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have a good attitude to work and contribute well in discussions.
- Students can apply their knowledge to case studies.
- The organisational skills of students need to improve.
- Weak literacy skills adversely affect standards.
- Good classroom relationships have a positive effect on learning.

Commentary

202. This GNVQ course in Year 12 meets the needs of students wishing to pursue care related studies in the sixth form and for whom AS and A-Level would be inappropriate. The school has offered this course for three years. A good feature of the curriculum is that all students have the opportunity to achieve a nationally recognised certificate in Basic Life Support.
203. Examination results in 2002 and 2003 for very small groups of students show the majority achieve in line with expectations and that few students 'drop out'. In 2003, a much larger number of students began the course with a high number leaving to take up employment. Of

those who remained, few achieved a pass grade. Staff illness restricted the close monitoring of students' coursework and many failed to meet deadlines.

204. Students enter this course with below average previous attainment at GCSE. Good classroom relationships build students' self-confidence so that they become independent learners. Current standards are average and students achieve satisfactorily. The school expects the present small group of Year 12 students to achieve a GNVQ pass grade based on their current performance. Students have a good attitude to work and say they enjoy the subject and find it interesting. They view the acquisition of a health and social care qualification as a stepping stone to future career aspirations. In lessons, students are lively and willing to make worthwhile contributions to class discussions. Students are able to research topics using a variety of sources and present their findings though weak literacy skills of many hinder communication, lead to superficial coverage of work, and have an adverse effect on standards. ICT is used for a variety of purposes including research and to improve presentation of work. In a unit of work on promoting health and wellbeing, students used case studies effectively. They were able to apply their knowledge and make suggestions for improvement in an individual's lifestyle.
205. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students speak well of their supportive relationship with their teachers. Lessons are well planned but only a limited number of strategies are used by teachers, all non-specialists, to present work. Opportunities for students to work in the wider community are limited and chances to extend learning and better relate it to future employment consequently missed. Teachers make students aware of all assessment criteria and provide good support materials. Students need to organise their work better to allow time to act on feedback from teachers before final deadlines.
206. The leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. Since the previous head of department left a replacement has not been appointed. Uncertainty surrounds the direction the subject will take in the light of imminent national changes. The work of the subject is managed satisfactorily on a day-to-day basis. This subject was not reported on at the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	6	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5	5
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	6	5
Overall standards achieved		5
Pupils' achievement	5	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	3	4
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	4	3
How well pupils learn	4	3
The quality of assessment	4	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	6	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	2	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	5	5
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	5	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	3
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	6	5

The leadership of the headteacher		4
The leadership of other key staff	5	4
The effectiveness of management	6	4

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