

Addendum to Ofsted Report 15th – 19th November 2004
Benton Park School
Unique reference number 108083
Inspection Number 268747

Please refer to PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS, “Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)”. The Grade has been changed from 3 (good) to 2 (very good).

Lead Inspector
Mr G Haney

INSPECTION REPORT

BENTON PARK SCHOOL

Rawdon, Leeds

LEA area: Leeds

Unique reference number: 108083

Headteacher: Mrs A M Clarke

Lead inspector: Mr G Haney

Dates of inspection: 15th – 19th November 2004

Inspection number: 268747

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 – 19
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1440

School address: Harrogate Road
Rawdon
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West Yorkshire
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Robert Mirfield

Date of previous inspection: 5th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Benton Park School is an above average sized 11-19 community comprehensive school with 1440 pupils, including 264 in the sixth form. The school has specialist technology college status and has received a number of awards, including Charter Mark, Sportsmark and Investor in People. The school has a successful link with Green Meadows Special School.

The school serves an economically advantaged area in the north of Leeds. The school is oversubscribed and accepts pupils from a large number of primary schools. Pupils' attainment on entry is well above average. The proportion of pupils that receive free school meals is below average at around 6 per cent. The number of non-English speaking pupils is very low and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is low. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. Pupil mobility is low, with a higher than average proportion of pupils remaining in the school from Year 7 through to Year 11.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1407	Peter Scott	Team inspector	Mathematics
11764	Pauleen Flannery	Team inspector	English
2082	Michael Connell	Team inspector	English
22780	David Custance	Team inspector	Science
33069	Sean O'Reilly	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
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33078	Keith Worrall	Team inspector	History; Geography
30854	Susan Foster	Team inspector	Citizenship and RE
3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15150	Susan Wilkinson	Team inspector	Music
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14563	Graham Pirt	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Psychology
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Benton Park is a good school with some very good features. Many pupils arrive with high levels of attainment and make the amount of progress that might be expected. As a result, pupils achieve standards of attainment well above the national average. The pupils receive a good quality of education. Teaching is good overall and very good in the sixth form. Both pupils and parents think that Benton Park is a good place to be educated. The school provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain high standards and achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils show a very good willingness to learn and they behave very well.
- There are excellent arrangements to make pupils' transition from primary schools as effective as possible.
- The development of vocational education from 14 to 19 has not yet resulted in significant numbers of pupils continuing their education into the sixth form in vocational courses.
- Pupils are well supported and cared for.
- The significant improvement in information and communication technology (ICT) resources is helping to raise achievement through their use in teaching, but their use by pupils is less effective.
- The school is well led and very efficiently managed.
- There is some inconsistency in the use of assessment and target setting to ensure that efforts of pupils and teachers are effectively focused. However, some very good practice exists.
- The school is inclusive so that pupils of different abilities and aptitudes are welcomed and valued; the link with Green Meadows School is very good and adds to the school's ethos.

Satisfactory improvements have been made in many of the areas identified in the last inspection. The monitoring of teaching has improved and the quality of teaching has remained high. Substantial improvements have been made in the accommodation, with a new teaching block and sports hall, but further improvement is required. The library has improved and there is now better provision for pupils to conduct personal research. The curriculum has widened for pupils aged 14 to 16 and is now good, but would still benefit from a further expansion of vocational pathways that lead to sixth form studies. A work experience programme has been established. Improvement in the provision for spiritual development has been slow, and the school still does not provide an act of collective worship. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 have remained high.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	B	A	D
Year 13	A/AS-level and VCE examinations	A	A	A	

The table above shows that by the end of Year 11 pupils' standards of attainment in 2004 were well above average. Pupils' standards of attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2003 and have risen in 2004. Work seen during the inspection confirmed above average standards throughout the school. Pupils make sound progress and achieve in line with their capability. Nevertheless in previous years there has been underachievement and the improvement in GCSE results has been slower than that found nationally.

Pupils' personal development is good. The attitudes of pupils to learning and their standards of behaviour are very good and a strength of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Spiritual provision is satisfactory, but less well developed than the others. Attendance and punctuality are very good and help in the maintenance of high standards of attainment.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of pupils' education is good. Teaching is a strength of the school, with almost three quarters of lessons judged to be good or better. As a result, pupils learn well and achieve high standards. Teaching is very good overall in the sixth form. In the quarter of lessons judged to be satisfactory, insufficient opportunity is taken to stimulate active involvement of pupils

The school curriculum is good overall, but has too few vocational opportunities that are linked to clear pathways for progression from Year 9 to further study. There are very good opportunities for enrichment beyond the normal school day. Pupils are well supported, guided and cared for. The arrangements for integrating pupils from primary schools are excellent and result in pupils settling in quickly and effectively. Arrangements for communicating with parents through the pupil planners are good, but yearly progress reports are too brief and incomplete.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school's leadership is good and management is very good; this results in a well-ordered and purposeful learning environment where pupils can make progress. The headteacher provides wisdom and clarity of vision. Other key staff demonstrate a commitment to future improvement and heads of subject departments are starting to modernise approaches to learning. Very good arrangements exist for the professional development of staff. Senior staff manage developments very effectively, but the arrangements for the systematic evaluation of initiatives lack impact in some areas. Governors are supportive and knowledgeable, but have not ensured that previous key issues have been tackled promptly, such as the improvement of spirituality and the provision of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils confirm a good level of satisfaction with the work of the school. Almost all pupils feel that Benton Park is a good place to be. A significant area of disquiet on the part of pupils is their perception of bullying and views of behaviour. Inspectors judge that the school is making good efforts to care appropriately for pupils and that behaviour is very good. Some parents feel that communication could be improved and inspectors support the view that reports on pupils' progress could be better.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- develop more effective curriculum pathways from 14 to 19 and expand the range of vocational provision post-16 to ensure that pupils follow relevant programmes of study;
- improve use of ICT within teaching and learning to include the full range of subjects;
- spread good practice in the use of assessment and target setting so that all teachers use the most effective techniques;
- improve the provision for spiritual development, including statutory arrangements for collective worship;
- improve the quality of pupils' reports and ensure that statutory reporting regulations are met.

THE SIXTH FORM AT BENTON PARK SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provision is good and it is sound in its cost-effectiveness. Students' achievement is good and almost all students express a very high level of satisfaction in the school's provision. Many pupils achieve a good measure of success in external examinations. There is only a limited take-up of vocational courses by students entering the sixth form. This represents a weakness in the school's efforts to provide for students seeking vocational education and for students of more modest ability.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students' achievement and current standards of work are good.
- The school's provision in the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11 results in too few students continuing their education in vocational courses.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Provision of support and guidance to students is very good.
- The management of the sixth form is very effective.

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. Thirteen subjects in the sixth form were inspected and other subjects sampled.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<p>English is good. Students' achievement is good. Teaching and learning are also good.</p> <p>French is good. Students' achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Mathematics is good. Students' achievement is satisfactory, with teaching and learning being good.</p>
Science	<p>Chemistry is satisfactory. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.</p>
Information and communication technology	<p>Information and communication technology is satisfactory. Students' achievement and teaching and learning are all satisfactory.</p>
Humanities	<p>History is very good. Very good students' achievement that is based on very good teaching and learning.</p> <p>Geography is good. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good.</p> <p>Psychology is very good. Students' achievement is good and teaching and learning are very good.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p>Art is very good. Students' achievement is good, and teaching and learning are very good.</p> <p>Media studies is very good. Students' achievement is very good, and teaching and learning are very good.</p>

Engineering, design and manufacturing	Design and technology is good. Students' achievement is good, and teaching and learning are good.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Physical education is good. Students' achievement is good. Teaching and learning are very good.
Business	Business studies is very good. Students' achievement is good. Teaching and learning are very good.

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 'out standing' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The provision of support, advice and guidance to students is very good. Staff in leadership and management roles are very caring and strongly encourage students in their studies and personal development. Students confirm other evidence indicating very good pastoral support. The school is very good in involving students through seeking and acting on their views.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership of the sixth form is good and the management is very effective. Under the guidance of the key staff involved the school has maintained high standards in students' attainment across a wide range of academic courses. Students are very well supported in their studies. It remains a challenge for leaders of the sixth form curriculum to establish arrangements that create equally good provision for students seeking vocational courses and those of more modest ability.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students express a very high level of satisfaction with the school's provision. A high percentage of pupils finishing their GCSE courses wish to stay into the sixth form. Students are warm in their praise of sixth form leaders and managers, and speak highly of their teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

In 2004, standards attained by pupils in Year 11 were well above the national average, based on unvalidated national data. Pupils enter the school with well above average levels of attainment in Year 7. The 69 per cent of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A*-C grades reflect a good level of achievement, as these pupils maintain high levels of attainment. In 2004, the pupils in Year 9 attained standards well above the national average in mathematics, above average in science and high standards in English. Results and achievement at GCE A-level were good overall in 2003 and improved in 2004. Achievement is raised by pupils learning in an environment where expectations are high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieved high levels of attainment in GCSE examinations in 2004.
- Students made excellent progress in A-level design and technology, biology, film studies, history, media studies and psychology in 2004.
- The improvement in GCSE results between 1999 and 2003 was slower than the national trend.
- In comparison with similar schools, based on the pupils' prior attainment, GCSE results are below average.
- English results in Year 9 improved well in 2004.
- 2004 GCSE results improved well in art and design, geography, German, history and sports studies.
- There is good achievement in media studies, design and technology, French, geography and child development at GCSE.
- The achievement in GNVQ information and communication technology (ICT) provides pupils who take this course with good skills.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.7 (34.3)	N/A (33.4)
mathematics	38.0 (37.5)	N/A (35.4)
science	35.0 (36.1)	N/A (33.6)

There were 238 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. The 2004 school results have been calculated from unvalidated data supplied by the school.

Commentary

1. Overall, the attainment of pupils on intake to the school, based on national tests in English, mathematics and science, is well above average.
2. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the results in mathematics were well above average and above average in science. In English, pupils achieved improved levels of attainment compared to 2003, which was above average. Overall these results represent good achievement by pupils in maintaining their high levels of attainment.

3. In 2004, when compared to schools with similar levels of attainment on intake, pupils performed at levels in line with the group average in mathematics and science. Overall, in 2003, taking into account English, mathematics and science, pupils performed below the average for similar schools.
4. English, in 2004, has reversed the downward trend over the previous three years. Mathematics has continued to improve attainment in line with national trends. However, science, despite remaining above the national average, has a decreasing attainment trend. Observations during the inspection showed that pupils are working at above average levels in English, mathematics and science and are achieving well.
5. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are achieving well in almost all subjects. There is very good achievement in music in Years 7 to 9 despite a lack of ICT-based resources. Achievement in drama, religious education and science is satisfactory.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	69 (62)	53 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (96)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) ¹	319.4 (38.6)	282.8 (34.7)

There were 245 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Pupils achieve very highly by the end of Year 11. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, pupils' overall attainment, when considering the grades achieved in the best eight subjects taken by each pupil, was well above the national average. This was an improvement on the previous four years, when attainment has been above the national average. There was a very good increase in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades. However, the rate of increase in results from 1999 to 2003 was slower than the national trend. The standard of work observed in Years 10 and 11 was above average.
7. Pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11, based on their attainment in Year 9, was above average in 2004. However, in 2003, progress was well below average; this represented underachievement for this group of pupils. The school analysed thoroughly the reasons for this underachievement and put in place a series of measures to raise attainment. These have been successful; staff absence in key areas has been reduced and rigorous examination preparation programmes have been implemented. Girls who did not attain high results in Year 9 performed comparatively well in GCSE examinations. Many pupils have taken advantage of subjects studied in time outside the normal school day. In particular the study of GNVQ ICT has enabled many students to gain the equivalent of four GCSE A*-C passes in this subject. As a result, upper and middle attaining girls and upper attaining boys have significantly increased their average GCSE points scores as well as gaining good skills for future study.
8. The core subjects of the curriculum show high standards thanks to good teaching: the proportion of pupils in 2004 gaining English, mathematics and science grades A*-C is

¹ The average points score calculations were changed in 2004 to include a wider range of accreditation at age 16.

well above average. Sixty-nine per cent of pupils gained English at A*-C, similar to the previous year and 77 per cent gained English literature, a significant improvement. Fifty-three pupils were entered for the three separate sciences biology, chemistry and physics, where the success rate at A*-C was 100 per cent of those entered, as in the previous year. This provides a very good science background for these pupils.

9. High attainment is demonstrated across the curriculum. In 2003, in media studies, design and technology, French, geography and child development, GCSE results were all significantly above the national average. All of these subjects improved further in 2004. In 2003 German results were significantly below average, but in 2004 this improved greatly. However, Spanish results fell significantly. Art and design results were much higher in 2004, with very good proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades. Sports studies also gained a similarly creditable performance. Geography improved the proportion achieving at least a C, with a very high number gaining an A* or A grade. Child development, business studies, textiles, economics, Latin, history, religious studies, biology, chemistry and physics also scored very high proportions of A* or A grades from the pupils entered. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils is good. Overall, the 2004 results were a good improvement on those of 2003 and represent the kind of achievement that should be expected of pupils with a high attainment on entry.
10. Literacy skills across the curriculum are good. Pupils have good English skills when they enter the school and these are used and developed effectively within their lessons. Whole-school training has been successful in enhancing the place of literacy within subject schemes of work. There is generally a good concentration on subject-specific vocabulary, which enables pupils to communicate effectively. Research skills are generally good and enhanced by the improvements in the library.
11. Numeracy across the curriculum is good. As with English, pupils enter the school with good basic numeracy skills. Where these are lacking, the school provides 'catch-up' support. Despite the good level of skills the use of number in different subjects is only satisfactory. However, technically-based subjects such as science use numeracy skills appropriately and these add to raising pupils' achievement.

Sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004²

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.5 (90.0)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	37.0 (29.0)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	330.8 (286.7)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 96 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2003

12. Results at GCE A-level for students entering for two or more subjects, over the past four years, have varied between well above average and above average. The unvalidated data suggests that results in 2004 will also be at least above the national average

² Validated school data and national comparative data for 2004 in this table were not available at the time of the inspection. Where possible 2004 data is referred to in the commentary.

13. Although no national comparative data was available for the 2004 examinations, comparisons from an authoritative statistical organisation, 'Advanced Level Performance Systems' (ALPS), were available to compare the results. Overall, students made satisfactory progress from their GCSE performance. Students who achieved good or average grades at GCSE made very good progress with their average points scored per subject. Those students that had lower attainment at GCSE made less than satisfactory progress. The school needs to ensure that lower attaining students are studying the kinds of courses where they will gain their best success. Higher attaining students tend to study no more than three subjects to A-level, which is less than the average found elsewhere.
14. In 2004 students following film studies and design and technology (product design) made outstanding progress, achieving well above the levels suggested by their previous attainment. In biology, history, media studies and psychology pupils made excellent progress. Students in drama and theatre studies, English language and literature, and general studies made very good progress. In contrast, results in chemistry and physical education were less than satisfactory. Students in English literature and Spanish achieved relatively poor results, though both achieved very good results in 2003.
15. In general the results from the AS-level examinations are lower than those achieved in the A-level examinations. Students tend to do much worse in the AS subject they will 'drop' at the end of Year 12. As the students are already studying only four AS examinations in comparison with a more normal five, teachers need to ensure that students remain committed throughout Year 12 and monitor more effectively these students' achievement.
16. Students have good literacy and numeracy skills from their GCSE courses and many are now entering the sixth form with a GNVQ ICT qualification. However, the study of the key skills subjects of communication, use of number and ICT is less than satisfactory and few students complete the certificates in these disciplines.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to their work are **very good**, both in the main school and in the sixth form. Attendance is **very good**. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school achieves very high rates of attendance and pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.
- The vast majority of pupils behave very well and work hard in lessons, resulting in a calm working environment.
- Little progress has been made in the provision to promote the spiritual development of pupils since the last inspection and the school still fails to provide a daily act of collective worship.
- By the time pupils reach the sixth form they are mature, confident and responsible.
- Although most teachers adhere closely to the behaviour policy, this is not consistently applied in a small proportion of lessons.

Commentary

17. Attendance rates at the school are well above those achieved nationally and pupils are prompt to school. The systems in school to promote good attendance and to monitor absence and punctuality are very good. There is little unauthorised absence. Attendance in lessons is also followed up closely and pupils move from one lesson to the other quickly and calmly. The high level of attendance contributes well to the school's high standards.
18. Although a significant proportion of parents and pupils have concerns about behaviour and bullying, the vast majority of pupils conduct themselves very well. Staff provide a very good example, treating pupils with respect and expecting the same in return. The number of pupils excluded from the school is low and there have been only two pupils permanently excluded in the last 14 years. In lessons, pupils listen very well to their teachers and work well with each other when required. They show a high level of interest in their work, contribute well to discussions and behave responsibly, even when not directly supervised. In a few lessons, teaching styles do not allow pupils to be actively involved and learning is too passive. Behaviour around school is mostly very good. Instances of unkindness, name-calling and bullying are dealt with swiftly when reported to staff. A notable feature of the school is the presence of pupils from a local special school. These pupils are welcomed and their inclusion in the school is reported by most other pupils as being of benefit to all concerned.
19. The school has not fully addressed the key issue of the previous report with regard to the spiritual development of pupils. There is still no daily act of collective worship and in this the school does not meet its legal requirements. Weekly assemblies provide some opportunities for spiritual development, but these are not developed and there are few opportunities for pupils to reflect. The school has recently introduced 'thought for the week', but many pupils are not aware of it and it is not promoted well in most tutor periods.
20. On a few occasions, behaviour in lessons does not reach the high standards expected. This is usually because the behaviour policy and sanctions are not consistently applied, resulting in a few pupils with behavioural problems causing some disruption to learning.

Sixth form

21. Students in the sixth form are mature and sensible, showing very good attitudes to their work. They get on well with each other and with their teachers, expressing appreciation of the support of staff and the trust placed in students by staff. Many students provide help around school in lessons, in extra-curricular activities and at open evenings. Some train to help younger pupils in the peer mentoring scheme. Students show a great deal of self-confidence and the sixth form council has its own committee and budget, having an impact on school decisions such as the reward system and dress code. Students in the sixth form organise and produce a show each year, with the proceeds going to charity.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.9
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1336	72	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	2	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Chinese	7	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	39	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **good**. The good teaching and learning lead to good achievement. There is very good extension of learning opportunities beyond the school day. The excellent links with primary schools enable pupils to make an effective start to their life in the school. Pupils are well supported and provided with good curriculum opportunities.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is a strength of the school. It is good overall and similar to that found in the previous inspection. It is at least satisfactory in virtually all lessons. There is a very high proportion of very good or excellent teaching. There is little difference between the teaching in Years 7 to 9 and that in Years 10 and 11, but the teaching in Years 12 and 13 is very good overall, with almost nine tenths of the teaching being good or better. As a result, the learning of pupils in lessons is good overall. Assessment is satisfactory overall and there is some very good assessment practice that results in pupils understanding how they can improve, but the process is inconsistent across teachers and subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good across all year groups and almost all subjects.
- Teachers manage classes very well and pupils show good engagement with their work.
- Lessons are well planned and purposeful, with lessons having a good pace that encourages learning.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- In the lessons where learning is satisfactory pupils are somewhat passive and rely too much on the teacher.
- The use of assessment is improving and there is some very good practice, but approaches to setting pupil targets are inconsistent.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 204 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7(3%)	62 (30%)	79 (39%)	52 (25%)	3 (2%)	1 (1%)	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.

22. The quality of teaching is good in all year groups and very good in the sixth form. Teaching was less than satisfactory in a very small proportion of lessons and the common error in these was teachers talking too much and failing to engage pupils actively in their learning. Overwhelmingly, pupils show good attitudes to learning and in a few cases display excellent levels of concentration and engagement. As a result teachers are able to concentrate on their subjects and spend comparatively little time on managing behaviour. Time is managed well and pupils respond with enthusiasm.
23. Work on the national strategies in English, mathematics and science has helped develop and widen the approaches to teaching. Across all subjects, pupils are given clear objectives for learning and teachers plan effectively to fulfil them. However, the review of these objectives at the end of lessons is more 'hit and miss'. Too often there is insufficient time allowed for an effective summary and questions to assess pupils' understanding.

24. Teachers display a good knowledge of their subjects. This good level of subject expertise and enthusiasm often helps to sustain pupils' interest and ensure that good learning takes place. Some particularly strong teaching was seen in English and mathematics, in music in Years 7 to 9, and in art and physical education in Years 10 and 11. Very strong teaching was observed in art, business studies, media studies, physical education and psychology in the sixth form.
25. Learning is good throughout the school. The combination of good teaching and pupils' very good attitudes to learning leads to their making good progress in their lessons. As a result, the school maintains high standards of performance. In some subjects, such as modern foreign languages and English, the quality of learning is limited by the cramped accommodation for large classes of pupils. This leads to a restriction on pupils working in small groups.
26. Year 7 pupils are well integrated into the school, so that they settle in quickly and display a keenness to learn. For example, pupils in a personal, health, social and citizenship education lesson showed excellent attitudes; they concentrated effectively on a safety video and worked well in pairs to share their thoughts and experiences.
27. There is generally a good use of technical subject-based vocabulary in lessons. Pupils are expected to use the correct language in oral work, and teachers often reinforce this, ensuring that pupils understand and can spell difficult words. Pupils are trained to have good listening skills and become confident speakers.
28. In the best lessons there is intellectual or creative challenge within the learning tasks. Pupils are encouraged to learn from each other in a secure and well-structured environment.

Example of Outstanding Practice

A Year 7 poetry lesson kept pupils enthralled for the full session. The simple sequence of the lesson, which could easily have remained a superficial exercise in identifying adjectives, was transformed by the ambitious teaching. Pupils were challenged at every stage to bring their knowledge into play, to risk giving wrong answers and to justify their opinions by selecting from the text. They learnt rapidly from each other and from a teacher with the capacity to structure learning activities meticulously while giving pupils the freedom to contribute their ideas and their humour. Her excellent questioning skills and careful, varied grouping kept the pace moving and the laughter coming.

29. Assessment is satisfactory overall, but it is inconsistent across the school. The use of assessment to help pupils' understand what they need to learn is developing. This is a focus for the school this year and practice is improving. Some teachers make very good use of assessment gained whilst they are teaching and use this to target individual pupils. Where marking is good, pupils are given useful feedback on the quality of their work and how they can improve it. However, the quality of setting targets for pupils and translating these into information the pupils can understand varies from very good to satisfactory, and is an area where further progress can help pupils work with maximum efficiency.

Sixth form

30. A total of 54 lessons were seen in the sixth form. Almost half of the lessons were better than good. Students are expected to work hard and in general they respond to the challenge offered. In a few cases lower attaining students find the pace of learning difficult to keep up with and fail to engage fully in discussions.

31. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and well focused on the needs of the subject syllabus. Where teaching is best, it allows students to take risks and experiment as they develop new ideas; questioning is well focused and reflects the high expectations of the teacher. Generally marking is good, providing accurate feedback to the student. However, there are times when a more active involvement in evaluating the success of their targets would lead to more effective learning.

The curriculum

The school offers a broad curriculum that caters well for the needs of most pupils. There is good breadth and balance in most subjects. There is a very effective and wide range of curriculum enrichment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of curricular opportunities in Years 7 to 11 is good.
- The curriculum provided in history, geography, physical education, and modern foreign languages is a strength.
- Very good enrichment activities are available through a well-structured programme outside the normal school day.
- A low number of students take vocational options in the sixth form because there are limited pathways to vocational education available to them in Years 10 and 11.
- Statutory requirements for collective worship are not met.
- A good range of academic courses is offered and taken up by students in the sixth form.
- Only a small number of students in the sixth form take vocational options. Many vocational courses offered do not run because of insufficient numbers.
- The innovative Certificate in Financial Studies course in the sixth form prepares students well for life after school.

Commentary

32. A wide range of courses is offered in Years 7 to 11. Good curriculum coverage in history, geography and physical education ensures that all pupils gain access to a wide range of experiences. The curriculum provision for modern foreign languages is very good: all pupils continue to study a modern language until Year 11. A second language is available and business Italian is introduced as part of the work-related programme. Pupils with special educational needs, and those identified as gifted or talented, are well provided for. The newly introduced work-related learning course effectively meets the needs of the pupils guided towards it. Their programme includes weekly visits off-site to a local City Learning Centre for various activities, including film-making.
33. A comprehensive programme of additional activities provides support for learning outside the normal school day and this is well attended by pupils. Large numbers of pupils have chosen to take GNVQ ICT after school because this gives them a wider choice of what subjects to take during normal school hours.
34. Pathways to take pupils from age 14 to age 19 on a vocational programme from which they would gain success are limited. The development of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 has not yet resulted in significant numbers of pupils continuing with post-16 vocational routes. As a result, the take-up of vocational courses in the sixth form is low and many courses offered do not run because of insufficient numbers.

35. The statutory requirement for collective worship is not being met. Opportunities for spiritual development in school assemblies are limited, although the good practice observed in the sixth form assembly provided an example which could be followed elsewhere in the school.
36. Accommodation has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. New science laboratories have been created. A new block has been built, providing larger classrooms and additional ICT facilities. Sports facilities are very good. The library resources have been increased and the key issue from the last report has been satisfactorily addressed. ICT resources across the school have increased. There are more computers than in most schools of a similar size, but their use by pupils is lagging behind the provision. There is a growing range of learning resources on the school network, and the introduction of interactive whiteboards is beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching.

Sixth form

37. The curriculum in Years 12 and 13 is **satisfactory**. It represents a very similar picture to the curriculum at the time of the last inspection report. There is a range of traditional academic courses which are popular. These are supplemented by a small number of vocational courses.
38. There has been some innovation with the introduction of a course developed by the Institute of Financial Services. This is a ground-breaking course, which prepares students well for life in the modern world.

Care, guidance and support

The school has very good arrangements in place to ensure pupils' care, welfare and safety. Staff provide good personal support and guidance in the main school, and very good support in the sixth form. The school involves pupils very well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has excellent procedures for the induction of pupils into school which help to ensure smooth transfer from primary schools.
- The school has a well-organised network of support which identifies pupils in need of help and provides effective support for them in many ways.
- Pupils' views are sought, valued and acted upon.
- The school's health and safety procedures are very well organised, but the storage of materials in the art department poses a potential risk.

Commentary

39. A major strength of the school is the way in which pupils are helped to settle into Year 7 and the way in which staff work with primary schools to ensure a smooth transition. This is appreciated by parents and pupils alike. Pupils transfer from many schools and each pupil is visited at least once, with pupils from the main feeder schools receiving up to three visits. Information is exchanged and portfolios built up of academic and personal details which prove to be very useful during the first year of secondary education. Year 7 pupils are enlisted to act as guides during initial visits to the school and 'welcome booklets' are provided, so that pupils are very clear about school routines. Information about pupils with special educational needs is shared with their teachers.
40. The school has very good arrangements in place to identify pupils who need support, both academically and on a personal level. Parents value this support and appreciate the commitment of staff involved in the pastoral care of pupils. The learning mentor works very well with vulnerable pupils and the school also makes very good use of outside organisations, as well as using the expertise within school. Pupils themselves are involved in peer mentoring and several departments provide 'catch-up' classes to help pupils achieve higher grades. Relationships between adults and pupils are generally very good. However, tutor periods are too brief to contribute well to the otherwise very good personal support.
41. Although in many subjects assessment arrangements meet the needs of pupils, the quality of use of assessment information varies. In some cases, too little use is made of assessment information in order to guide pupils in their personal targets. In other cases, the match of future work is insufficiently guided by the outcome of recent assessments.
42. Pupils have very good opportunities to be actively involved in the life of the school and in the decision-making processes. Year councils consist of elected members and meetings provide a forum for pupils to express their views. These views are taken seriously by staff and governors. Two changes brought about by the actions of year councils are the changes to the dress code and the reward system. In Year 7, pupils are consulted about the induction procedures and recommendations are acknowledged.

43. Procedures to ensure the health, safety and welfare pupils are very well organised with experienced and committed staff who take great care to make sure that pupils are safe in school and on visits out of school. Arrangements are in hand to refurbish toilets which are at present in a poor state of repair. However, the lack of storage facilities in the art department has led to the storage of flammable materials too close to the kiln. The rooms are cluttered, so adequate cleaning is not possible. The health and safety issue should be addressed by the school as a matter of urgency.

Special educational needs

44. The curriculum is matched effectively to pupils with special educational needs. This is particularly the case for those pupils with statements of special educational needs or who receive identified funding. Pupils with lower levels of special need make good progress – equivalent to other pupils. Teachers are usually aware of the type of learning need and make efforts to give extra attention when necessary. The work-related curriculum is particularly beneficial for those pupils with special needs. It provides a very relevant content that interests them and allows them to achieve success.
45. Special educational needs procedures for pupils with statements of special educational needs and those with identified funding are good. Annual review procedures are carried out effectively and efficiently. The individual education plans for these pupils are well written in terms of main learning objectives. However, the individual education plans are for a full year and, although they are reviewed when there is perceived to be a need, there is no formal monitoring or evaluation of their success during the year. This aspect needs attention. Not all pupils on school action or school action plus have an individual education plan. However, departments are informed of the pupils' needs and are expected to make additional provision to meet their needs. Once again this is not effectively monitored and needs attention.
46. The link with Green Meadows Special School is very strong. The attendance of pupils from the special school in Benton Park contributes very well to the achievement of pupils from both schools and is a strong feature of the personal development of all.
47. Funding for special educational needs is well managed overall. The funding for statemented and identified pupils is very clearly allocated. The remainder of the notional funding is appropriately utilised in supporting smaller groups and in aspects of support and inclusion. However, the monitoring of the effectiveness of this part of the special needs budget is not as clear and the special education needs co-ordinator is insufficiently involved in this aspect.

Sixth form

48. Students in the sixth form receive very good support and guidance. They have good contact with their tutors and have confidence in their teachers. Their work is monitored regularly and good support given. Students appreciate the high level of advice provided when making choices about life after school, including higher education, training and employment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **satisfactory** links with parents. Links with the community are **good** and links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school and have positive views.
- Pupils' planners provide a very good means of communication between home and school and provide parents with useful information about school procedures.
- The information provided for parents in annual written reports and in the governors' report does not meet legal requirements

- The school has very good links with other schools and colleges, including with a local special school, which have a positive effect on pupils' learning and on their attitudes.

Commentary

49. Parents who expressed a view of the school were mostly very supportive and were pleased with most aspects of the school. Parents are particularly appreciative of the way in which pupils are taught and the progress they make. Some parents have reservations about the level of information they receive and about the how the school consults parents and acts upon suggestions. A significant number feel that the school is sometimes slow to address bullying and behavioural issues although inspectors found that staff take these issues very seriously and act accordingly when they is brought to their attention.
50. The school has identified communication between home and school as an area for development and has modified pupils' planners to include more information. These are used very well throughout the school and give parents detailed information about general issues as well as providing the means for dialogue when necessary. The school encourages and welcomes parental involvement and many examples were seen during inspection, when parents sought informal opportunities to talk to staff. Senior managers and pastoral staff make themselves available whenever possible. The quality of information on progress is, however, unsatisfactory. Annual written reports to parents are too brief to be useful and most lack guidance on how pupils can improve their work. The school fails to report on ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in this fails to comply with legal requirements. The governors' annual report to parents does not give the required information about the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs, which is also a legal requirement.
51. The school's links with the local community and business are very effective in the vocational courses studied and in the provision of work experience. There is very good liaison with primary schools in the transfer of pupils and in the curriculum, especially in design and technology, music and physical education. One major strength is the strong partnership between the school and a local school for children and young adults with special educational needs. There has been a shared management structure with this school and both establishments have benefited greatly from this arrangement. The Networked Learning Community provides an effective means to share expertise and good practice with other schools.

Sixth form

52. The school has good relationships with higher education establishments, which enable students to make informed choices about the next stage of their education. The involvement of parents of sixth form students is good and parents are very supportive. Some sixth form students choose to carry out work in the local community on one afternoon a week and some work in local establishments on their work placements for vocational courses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership is good and management is very good. Governance is satisfactory and governors strongly support the headteacher, who provides good leadership. She is supported well by senior colleagues who provide good management. There is good leadership from heads of

curricular areas and pastoral leaders. The school is very well managed with good systems of financial control.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The clarity of vision by the headteacher is well articulated.
- There is a good awareness by senior leaders of strengths and weaknesses in the school.
- The very strong focus on continuing professional development is raising standards.
- Induction of newly-qualified teachers is very good.
- There is good quality middle management, both pastoral and academic.
- There is a clear rationale for the management of resources.
- The school improvement plan does not describe outcomes precisely enough.

Commentary

53. The school continues to raise standards. The headteacher has a strong vision for the school and has worked tirelessly to improve provision, both in the academic sphere and in the school's ethos. The headteacher is knowledgeable about strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning and monitors these closely, working with senior and middle managers to provide good professional development, in order to improve quality. She tackles underperformance and changes responsibilities when necessary to suit better the needs of the pupils. She has the full support of her governors. The broad planning strategy for improvement is good, but the more detailed planning for implementation lacks precise criteria by which it can be measured. Governors offer the headteacher strong support for her vision and are knowledgeable about the school. However, they have been slow to react to the key issues from the previous inspection, one of which is still not effectively addressed.
54. The senior management team provides good support for the headteacher in managing the smooth running of the school. Strategies have recently been implemented to develop a variety of teaching and learning styles, and these have been well supported with professional development. The performance of the different subject departments is monitored closely by the headteacher. The amount and quality of monitoring of teaching by subject leaders are satisfactory, but vary across the school.
55. The quality of management is very good. Many subjects are effectively led and managed. In English, after a turbulent period, leadership is strong and there has been a good evaluation of priorities. Very good leadership and management are seen in other departments, some with relatively new heads of department, such as in humanities and modern languages. Strategic planning in the departments is linked effectively to whole-school priorities and expectations are high.
56. The school has satisfactory systems for self-evaluation. Subject leaders are accountable for performance of their departments and engage in discussions with line managers. However, the system is not as consistent as it should be across the school, with line managers interpreting their roles differently, though this is improving. Examination performance and data are analysed, but this does not always lead to necessary changes in the curriculum. The business studies department, a high performing department, recognises that some of its courses are not best suited to all its pupils.

57. There is satisfactory provision of data for middle managers, but its use is variable. In some subject areas, though there are policies for target setting, and pupils understand their targets and the techniques to improve, not all teachers are using these effectively. This is the case in mathematics and religious education. The use of assessment is satisfactory, but varies considerably from department to department.
58. A high commitment to professional development exists in the school, led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. National strategies are being implemented through properly targeted training. Newly qualified teachers are well supported in their first year of teaching. Performance management of experienced teachers is managed well and teachers report that targets are implemented and closely monitored.
59. The financial management systems are strong. Funding is allocated to achieving the school's objectives as a technology college. Money is accurately tracked and accounted for, though this information is not always well shared with middle managers. The funding for special educational needs is well managed overall, but the manager is insufficiently involved in the spending strategy. The funding for statemented pupils is very clearly allocated. The remainder of the national funding is appropriately utilised in supporting smaller groups and in aspects of support and inclusion.
60. The day-to-day organisation of the school is very effective and well managed. Good progress has been made in looking at reforming the workforce in line with government requirements. The school provides good value for money.

Sixth form

61. The headteacher and senior managers have a clear philosophy for the sixth form which includes retaining a strong academic tradition. To this end they are successful. Standards are good. The sixth form is very well managed and students are well supported in pursuit of their higher educational goals. The school has recently introduced two A-level vocational courses, but has not ensured that an adequate range of vocational courses is effectively linked to courses in Years 10 and 11. As a result planned courses are cancelled.
62. There has been a significant excess in expenditure over income in the past two years, but this funding has been carefully analysed. The high costs of some small groups are weighed against the recruitment and retention of staff who provide teaching of very high quality, and the value that the sixth form students provide as role models for other pupils in the school. The sixth form, therefore, gives satisfactory value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,031,505	Balance from previous year	127,860
Total expenditure	5,092,778	Balance carried forward to the next	66,587
Expenditure per pupil	3,564		

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

What is the effectiveness of work-related learning?

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good work-related course for a group of 12 pupils in Year 10.
- There is little use of work-related study elements within the main curriculum.

Commentary

63. Since the time of the last Ofsted inspection the school has improved its arrangements for work-related learning. Work experience is provided for all pupils in Year 10. In order to meet the needs of a small group of pupils in Year 10 a specific work-related curriculum has been devised. This is a recent introduction, but the evidence is that the provision is beneficial for the pupils involved. Other pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive work-related education through elements of the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. However, there is little evidence of other elements of work-related study by pupils across the curriculum. Few pupils report tuition in Years 10 and 11 which might encourage them to continue to their education in vocational courses or which might encourage pupils of modest ability to seek advancement through continuing their education at Benton Park.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN 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 in all years are good and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good with some practice of the highest standard.
- There is now a strong leadership team with appropriate priorities for raising standards further.
- Assessment practice is satisfactory but insufficiently developed to help pupils better understand how to improve their writing.

Commentary

64. After disappointing results in 2003, English national tests in 2004 showed a good improvement in both Year 9 and Year 11. At GCSE, standards for both boys and girls were well above the national average, but still below levels obtained in similar schools. GCSE literature results are good and a particular strength.
65. Speaking and listening are of a good standard. The most able pupils demonstrate an excellent capacity to use language for a wide range of purposes. The great majority speak and listen well. Reading standards are also good overall. In sustained reading, many pupils of all ages read fluently with appropriate expression and show a good level of understanding. In Year 10 and 11 lessons the most able and middle ability groups applied analytical strategies confidently to explore complex meanings. Writing in Years 7 and 8 is less strong than in Years 9, 10 and 11. Work included many grammar exercises in books but no clear sequence for writing development. It lacked structure and variety.
66. Achievement in lessons in all year groups is often good and occasionally very good; pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress. When interactive approaches are well used, pupils of both sexes respond to the challenge of participation with enthusiasm and show they can work independently. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well.
67. Teaching is good and occasionally exemplary. Subject knowledge is very good. In the very best lessons the level of intellectual challenge is matched by lively, engaging and varied strategies that enable pupils of all abilities to learn at a good pace, while thoroughly enjoying the experience.
68. While no lesson was less than satisfactory, teachers' confidence and skill vary in the use of the interactive approaches that benefit pupils. Assessment and marking of pupils' work, particularly in Years 7 to 9, are uneven and need to be carefully linked to pupils' personal targets.

69. Learning is good, because pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and the great majority are well committed to their work and keen to succeed. When teaching is particularly good, pupils of both sexes respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment; they work hard and fast to meet the challenge presented by the lesson.
70. Leadership is good. A strong, newly-appointed leadership team has made a good start in building on the department's strengths and identifying key priorities. They are using internal monitoring and external consultancy effectively to identify development needs. English makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social education and provides good extra-curricular opportunities. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. It now needs to ensure that provision is always very good by developing more consistent approaches to teaching and assessment.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

71. Pupils enter the school with very good skills in English and the school builds effectively on their command of spoken and written forms. The school has recently appointed a new literacy co-ordinator from the English department with the skills to work effectively across the school. She is auditing current work and identifying priorities for development in an effective way. Whole-school training has, in many departments, made a positive impact. In both history and geography, examples of very good practice were seen, which included literacy objectives being written into schemes of work. In many subjects good examples were seen of the development of specialist vocabulary and key terms. A qualified librarian makes a contribution to developing pupils' skills in information retrieval and research.

Drama

72. Provision for drama is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Standards at GCSE are good, with attainment close to the national average and improving. In Years 7 to 9 pupils have infrequent lessons and are often taught by non-specialist teachers. Standards are, however, in line with national expectations for Year 9 and pupils use a range of drama conventions with a sound level of confidence, commitment and understanding. In Years 10 and 11 they reach a good standard, gaining in skills and understanding. They devise and present work in lessons that is satisfactory. Pupils reflect well upon and evaluate the outcomes of their work. They co-operate well and are committed to their learning and their work.
73. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Attitudes and behaviour are good; pupils co-operate well and listen to the teacher and to each other.
74. Teaching, by non-specialists in Years 7 to 9, is satisfactory, but it is good in Years 10 and 11, where pupils benefit from lively, effective and specialised teaching from staff with good specialist knowledge. Work at GCSE also benefits from good assessment, good pupil management and good studio accommodation. Drama makes a good contribution to pupils' oral skills and to their extra-curricular opportunities.
75. Learning is good overall, but is best when pupils are pushed to enact with speed, rather than spending too long discussing how they are going to enact. When this demand drops, learning becomes satisfactory rather than good. Leadership is good and planning is well supplemented by guidance on monitoring and assessment. The subject would benefit greatly by the extension of specialist teaching into Years 7 to 9 and improved assessment through the use of individual pupil targets.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good and have led to a very good improvement in a short time.
- Assessment is very well used to support learning.
- Pupils have no choice of language on entry to the school.
- Pupils have no books to use at home.

Commentary

76. This is an improving department as a result of new leadership and a sharing of responsibilities, for example in monitoring pupils' written work, by three heads of subject. Half the pupils take French, the other half Spanish from Year 7. German is begun in Year 9 by pupils in the top two sets out of four in each language cohort. The school is one of a small percentage of schools in which all pupils take a language in Years 10 and 11 and this adds to the breadth of their education. Around 10 of these pupils each year take two modern languages.
77. In 2004, GCSE French results remained above average, Spanish fell back to below average from being in line with national standards in 2003. German, which had been well below average in 2003, recovered to above average. In 2004, all pupils taking GCSE Latin obtained a grade in the range A*-C, over half of them at A or A*.
78. In French, girls performed significantly better in relation to their other subjects in 2003, than girls did nationally, whilst boys did as well as other boys. In German and Spanish, girls' and boys' average scores relative to their other subjects were not significantly different from the national figures for boys and girls respectively. Analysis of written work showed that in French, the standards achieved by current Year 11 pupils are well above average; in German and Spanish they are average. In addition to the three modern languages, one after-school Latin lesson was sampled in Year 10. Teaching and learning are good, and pupils achieve well, reaching above average standards in Latin and gaining insights into the derivation of English vocabulary.
79. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 and 2004 showed that a well above average proportion of pupils reached the expected levels of the National Curriculum in their first foreign language. There are relatively few pupils who, with the good teaching, do not reach this standard. However, from analysis of written work, the present Year 9 pupils in relation to pupils in other schools are above average in French rather than well above, and average in Spanish. This apparent mismatch occurs because of some inconsistency in assessment procedures: pupils are being assessed at the end of the year according to an objective criterion, and in Spanish according to less well defined expectations at a different time of year.
80. Teaching overall is good, and four very good lessons were seen during the inspection. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good language skills, usually in two of the three languages taught, and they use these effectively in the conduct of lessons. Pupils are, in the main, well motivated and enjoy their learning. Overall, they achieve well in all three languages throughout their five years. They have a clear idea about how to move forward because each step is checked off by the teacher as part of the standardised assessment policy. Pupils with special educational needs are also well engaged, and some exemplary classroom assistant work was seen in which the assistant took the role of learner alongside the pupil.
81. In some classes, learning is restricted because class sizes are too large for the particular room. Homework is not used to best effect because pupils have no textbooks of any kind to support learning at home. Use of ICT in teaching is satisfactory, and the department now has two interactive whiteboards on which some very good work is done. At present the school has no links with France, Spain or Germany, and pupils have very little opportunity to meet native speakers of the language they are learning. Overall progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are good and improving.
- Good teaching leads to pupils doing better than expected.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning.
- Monitoring of some aspects of teaching and learning are insufficiently rigorous.
- Good leadership and management are helping to improve provision.
- Use and provision of ICT and library resources fall short of expectations.

Commentary

82. Achievement is good. Pupils, who are above the expected standard on entry, make satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 11. In 2004, results in national tests in Year 9 were above the average whilst at the end of Year 11, in GCSE examinations, they were well above the national average. Higher attaining pupils performed very well in both tests and examinations, especially at the end of Year 11. The improving trends in results at the end of Years 9 and 11 are closely following those found nationally. In recent years, there have been no significant differences between the performances of boys and girls in national tests and examinations. In 2004, higher attaining boys performed better than girls of similar attainment. Pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. This is because teaching continues to be good and pupils' attitudes towards learning are very positive.
83. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. This is because they have a secure grasp of the properties of numbers that they use well to improve their learning of more difficult ideas. From Year 7, pupils solve problems mentally, with increasing confidence, and show different methods for arriving at correct answers. They use their strengths in numeracy to improve their learning. For example, groups of average attaining pupils in Year 8 understood quickly the interrelationship between fractions, decimals and percentages because their understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division was strong. In Year 11, lower attaining pupils made good strides in simplifying algebraic equalities by using their competency in the application numbers to build effectively on previous work. Pupils' skills in literacy are generally good. However, a few younger lower attaining pupils have some difficulties in explaining correct answers using appropriate technical language.
84. The quality of teaching is good. The demands of the teachers, who expect and receive high standards of behaviour, mean that learning is good overall. The use of the guidelines for the National Numeracy Strategy has influenced positively the planning and methods of teaching, but without consistency within the department. Many good features have been incorporated in lessons, but consolidating learning at the end of a lesson is an area for attention. There are limited ICT resources and those that are available are not used consistently and efficiently. Teachers use assessment well and regularly to help pupils understand how they can improve. Broad targets for department, year group and class improvement are set, but the use of objectives and targets to respond to individual needs are at an early stage of development.

85. Leadership and management are good. An effective team of largely experienced teachers has a clear focus on raising standards and improving achievement for all pupils. Their professional development is well supported through regular and appropriate training. A newly qualified teacher is receiving very good attention and support. Teachers' expertise is well matched to the needs of the pupils and the department is efficiently managed and organised on a daily basis. Some monitoring of teachers' work linked to performance management takes place. This does not extend fully to the sharing of good practice, of which there is much, and the implementation of new strategies, for example the outcomes of lesson planning.
86. Improvements since the previous inspection are satisfactory. The department has kept well abreast of continuing curriculum development and has adjusted courses well to meet changing needs and requirements of the pupils. Monitoring the quality of education has improved but only marginally. Library resources for mathematics remain unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

87. Pupils' competence in the use of number is good. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because they have a secure knowledge and understanding of the basic arithmetical operations. From Year 7, pupils build upon strong mathematical skills to learn new ideas, which they are able to transfer to other subjects and use successfully if opportunities are presented. They use mental operations and calculators well. They have a good understanding of interpretation of graphs, use of algebraic techniques and the inter-conversion of measurements. There is a well-written school policy, which includes recommendations from the National Numeracy Strategy. A co-ordinator has actively pursued dissemination and training associated with the strategy between and within subject departments. The use of number to help learning in other subjects is satisfactory overall, but there is room for improvement. Most subject departments have a numeracy policy and a few indicate in their schemes of work and lesson planning where opportunities occur. However, the school and department policies do not always emerge as consistent practice. In science, geography, design and technology and art there is appropriate use of number, which is contributing to raising pupils' achievement.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good staff/pupil relationships enhance pupils' achievement.
- Teachers are well deployed to make use of their specialist knowledge.
- A committed, hard-working and mutually supportive teaching team is well led by the head of department.
- An efficient and dedicated technician team gives good teaching support.
- The structure of a few lessons does not leave sufficient time for good consolidation at the end.
- Many pupils' understanding of how and what they need to learn is not strong enough.
- Poor memory of facts by middle and lower attaining pupils reduces their achievement.

Commentary

88. Standards remain above average. Results in 2004 showed that by the end of Year 9, standards were above the national average and that pupils had achieved satisfactorily compared with standards on entry. This is due not only to sound teaching, but also to the good attitudes that pupils display towards their learning. In a Year 8 class studying digestion, careful application of practical skills enabled pupils to make a model of the gut to study the digestion of starch. They worked well in pairs and were able to discuss what they were doing using scientific terminology, and to make simple predictions on the outcome of the experiment. By Year 9, pupils are able to build on existing knowledge, as seen in a class comparing reactions of metals with acids. Pupils understood the concept of different reaction rates and were able to describe how they could use their observations to produce a table of metal reactivity. However, many middle and lower ability pupils have difficulty in remembering facts and explaining concepts.
89. Attainment in the 2004 GCSE was above the national average and pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. Standards of knowledge and understanding were above average in samples of Year 11 coursework. Planning and observational skills were sound, though evaluation and analysis need to be strengthened, particularly amongst lower ability pupils. Good use of ICT was seen in a computer simulation of braking distance; word-processing and graphical techniques were used well in coursework presentation. By Year 11, pupils have developed their critical and enquiring skills. For example, in a class learning about monoclonal antibodies, pupils were able to engage in an active discussion on the principles of the HIV test. However, the ability of middle and lower ability pupils to remember facts and relate different aspects of the subject is insufficiently strong, as was shown in a number of classes revising for their modular examinations. At all levels, standards shown by pupils with special educational needs are commensurate with others in their classes. Selected higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 have volunteered to study after school for GCSE in the separate sciences – a good foundation for sixth form work.
90. The quality of teaching is good. Good classroom relationships, where pupils respect their teachers, ensure positive learning attitudes. Teachers generally teach their own branch of science. They are confident in their knowledge of the subject and use the breadth of this knowledge to extend and enhance pupils' learning. Good use of ICT was seen in a class accessing the Internet to observe dissection of a cow's eye and in the use of interactive whiteboards for class discussion. Lessons are well planned and conducted at a pace commensurate with pupils' ability. However, occasional instances were observed where insufficient time was left at the end of lessons for a proper summary and assessment of pupils' understanding. While some marking and commentary in pupils' written work are exemplary, there is too much variation in the level of assessment within the department. Assessment grades are used effectively to monitor pupils' progress. However, while pupils know their target grades, there is insufficient subject-specific guidance on how these are to be achieved. Teachers have good knowledge of individual learning needs, especially those with special educational needs, and co-operate well with learning assistants to ensure effective learning. While homework is regularly set, it is not formally timetabled, which reduces its effectiveness in consolidating what is covered in lessons.
91. Science staff work well as a team, led by an effective head of department. Good teaching practice is shared and regular performance monitoring is conducted by the departmental management team – an improvement since the last report. Good relationships with senior management enable meaningful discussion and sharing of

aims. All members of the department benefit from opportunities for personal development and newly qualified teachers receive good initial support. Records of pupils' performance are comprehensive and readily accessible on the department's database. The department gives good learning support outside the timetable, providing a science club for Years 7 to 9 and additional revision, and organising outside visits. Links are gradually being established with feeder schools to ensure continuity of the curriculum in Year 7. New laboratories have provided the accommodation lacking at the time of the last report. ICT and library facilities have been enhanced and now provide a valuable resource for learning. A dedicated team of technicians provides very good support in the department.

Biology

92. One lesson in **biology** was observed. Teaching was good. The structure of the lesson was well matched to pupils' abilities, giving them opportunities for independent learning and challenging their powers of analysis. The good relationship between teacher and pupils promoted satisfactory learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The results of Year 11 pupils who took the examination course in 2004 were very good.
- Assessment is not used consistently to help teachers plan lessons based on what pupils understand. Marking often does little to help pupils to improve.
- In well-planned lessons, pupils have clear opportunities to make progress at their own pace, and they are clear what they need to do to improve.
- Reports to parents do not include comments on pupils' progress in ICT.

Commentary

93. In 2004, results in GNVQ ICT were well above average, with 73 out of 74 pupils successfully completing the course. In Years 7 to 9, the standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with national expectations for this age range. In Years 10 and 11, pupils taking the examination course perform better than others. About half of the pupils in these years are taking the examination course, either during the normal school day, or in the innovative after-school lessons.
94. Analysis of pupils' work over time indicates that assessment is not consistent. It is not used to enable teachers to plan lessons to meet the needs of individual pupils because it does not occur frequently enough. In Years 7 to 9, there is a suitable system in place to help pupils understand how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve. However, it is not used consistently. Teachers' marking too often did little to help pupils make progress and specific targets were not commonly seen.
95. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching observed. In less effective lessons, pupils were not sufficiently challenged and they found the work easy. In these lessons, pupils were often unsure how well they are doing, and unclear about what they needed to do to improve. In well-taught lessons, pupils had opportunities to progress at their own rate and to review their work against National Curriculum

expectations, and the teacher provided well-matched work to extend their learning in a constructive way.

96. Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory. Vocational courses have been introduced in Years 10, 11 and 12. These are successful. There is a clear vision for the role of ICT in the school, including at senior level. However, there is too little structured monitoring of the quality of learning, allowing the variations mentioned above to continue.
97. The school has kept pace with national developments in ICT and has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.
98. The award of specialist college status has helped the school to increase the number of computers across most subjects. This is better than the current national target. Good use is made of learning resources on the school network to support pupils working independently. There are links with partner primary schools for technical support, and with the local initial teacher training scheme. The use of a local City Learning Centre provides a worthwhile off-site experience for pupils on the work-related learning course.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

99. The school has worked hard to increase the resources for ICT across a range of subjects. There is good use of ICT to extend learning in science, design and technology and media studies. The use of interactive whiteboards in some classrooms is beginning to have an impact on teaching, for example in English and religious education, and on pupil use in history. The embedding of ICT in classroom practice is less developed; for example although the mathematics department has access to a set of laptop computers, these were observed being used in only one lesson. Music has only limited access to appropriate ICT. Only six computers are available with appropriate software, to allow composing and sequencing.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is insufficient baseline assessment on entry in Year 7.
- The development of pupils' language skills is a strength of the department.
- The use of ICT as a teaching tool is a strength across the department.
- There is insufficient matching of work to different groups of pupils.
- The wide variety of teaching and learning strategies deployed by the department enhances the quality of learning.
- Assessment currently is largely summative, although the department is moving to more formative assessment models.

Commentary

100. Pupils achieve well in geography in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9 their knowledge and understanding, above average on entry, have been lifted to well above national expectation. Pupils are able to use geographical terms well and know how to read maps and use atlases. They recognise features and characteristics of earthquakes, including primary and secondary responses. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are achieving well above national expectation. The overall trend of attainment is rising. Pupils are able to identify and explain features such as migration and the process by which it occurs. However, there is insufficient adaptation of work to extend the most able and support less able pupils.
101. Through the National Key Stage 3 Strategy the department is developing a range of active teaching and learning styles, as part of the drive to raise standards. Much has been done to engage pupils; for example, a recent audit of provision in Years 7 to 9 ensures the deployment of a variety of teaching strategies to engage all learners. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are extremely positive. Pupils enjoy geography and respond well to interesting and engaging teaching. Visual images are used well to stimulate discussion.
102. The departmental focus on assessment for learning through the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. A strong emphasis on skills training, especially through literacy, is evident in lesson planning. Numeracy is also being built into schemes of work and pupils are extending their ability to analyse data in order to describe geographical phenomena. The head of department has refined the use of data to inform planning. This is linked with systematic target setting in which all pupils have a target grade and are aware of the aspect of their work they need to improve. However, the department currently does not undertake any baseline assessment on entry in Year 7 and so is unclear as to the level of attainment in geography of pupils during the first term.
103. Assessment of pupils' attainment is secure and moderated internally. The department is moving towards more formative methods of assessment. A few staff use ICT as an effective teaching tool, but opportunities for pupils using ICT require further development.

104. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have continued to rise. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve above the national average compared with those in similar schools and make good progress. This is also true of results in Years 10 and 11. The head of department has a clear vision and understanding of what needs to be done in order to further raise standards and has fostered a strong team ethos in a department of committed and enthusiastic teachers.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good.
- There is a good team of specialist teachers who are fully committed to high quality learning and to improving standards.
- There is some good use of assessment to inform pupils how they can improve.
- ICT as a tool for teaching is effectively used.
- There is an over-reliance on traditional whole-class teaching resulting in passive learning when opportunities for independent learning are missed.
- A minority of boys underachieve in Years 10 and 11 against their prior attainment.

Commentary

105. Standards in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 are above average. However, a minority of boys in Years 10 and 11 achieve below levels expected from their prior attainment and ability. This is related to some over-directive teaching and a lack of variety in learning styles.
106. In lessons teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and occasionally creative in the methods employed to gain pupils' interest and stimulate learning. For example, in a paired activity in a Year 7 lesson, pupils constructed a mind map which evaluated reasons for the success of the Roman army. In a Year 9 lesson that focused on the slave trade, a variety of artefacts was used to highlight the poor conditions on slave ships. Pupils' interest was awakened and opportunities were developed to extend pupils' understanding of historical and technological developments through the effective use of artefacts and everyday objects.
107. Pupils know what is expected of them in lessons. They consistently demonstrate good behaviour and a very positive attitude to learning. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils promotes the enjoyment of history. High teacher expectations of pupils and consistent behaviour management across the department ensure that a positive, supportive learning environment is prevalent in all lessons. However, sometimes the focus in lessons is more on whether the history curriculum is being covered rather than on the suitability of the tasks to challenge pupils. This can be seen particularly in Years 7 to 9, where opportunities for independent learning are missed, due to over-directive teaching. Consequently, in some lessons pupils are merely passive learners.
108. Assessment is improving and moving towards what to do to improve rather than simply grading work. The departmental focus on assessment for learning through the national strategy is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. There is a strong emphasis on skills training, especially through literacy, which enables pupils to be confident speakers with good listening skills. Teachers' assessment is secure. All pupils know what level they are currently operating at and have individual target grades. Marking is becoming increasingly diagnostic, so that pupils know what they have to do to improve, and there are also opportunities for peer assessment. There is insufficient knowledge of pupils' attainment in the first term of Year 7 to effectively plan for progression in history skills.

109. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have continued to rise. The department uses ICT as an effective tool for teaching and there is further scope to develop its use as a learning tool. The head of department has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to further improve standards in history and is supportive of those in the department who are less experienced, but who have a keen interest in teaching and learning.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good** and meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils in Years 10 and 11 now take the short course GCSE examination.
- Attitudes to the subject and behaviour in lessons are very good.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not given enough guidance on how to improve their work.
- Assessment procedures are inconsistently applied, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Religious education contributes to pupils' spiritual development.

Commentary

110. Standards seen during the inspection were broadly average in all years. The setting of relevant homework helps to consolidate and extend pupils' learning. By the end of Year 9 pupils have covered the religions set out in the Leeds Agreed Syllabus, though work in books reflects neither pupils' developing conceptual understanding, nor opportunities to link learning about different religions to their own beliefs and values.
111. Standards in Year 10 and 11 are average and occasionally good. Results in the short course GCSE, examined for the first time in 2004, were slightly below the national average. The small number of pupils taking the full GCSE course achieved well above national norms. The introduction of the short course has significantly improved pupils' motivation and attitudes, as was evident in lessons where almost all were very attentive and many showed interest and understanding. By the end of Year 11, pupils are able to show their understanding of religious concepts by extended writing, which is accurate, analytical and increasingly evaluative. They are able to put forward arguments for and against controversial issues, and in lessons express themselves fluently in discussion.
112. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in all years. No difference was noted between the overall performance of boys and girls in any year. Pupils start in Year 7 with skills and knowledge gained at primary school, which are often above the national expectations. By the end of the year they cover a wide range of topics and religions and have a good understanding of the basic concepts. Higher ability pupils achieve less well than others throughout Years 7 to 9, as the work is often set at too low a level. Occasionally marking does not show how pupils can improve their work.
113. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, although a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Evidence from pupils' books shows that learning in lessons is not always consolidated in their writing. Pupils are not given sufficient guidance on how to improve the quality of their work. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good and sometimes very good. Where teaching is very good, lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Learning objectives are achieved through stimulating pupils with a good range of interesting and challenging activities including the use of an interactive whiteboard. In the one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, the pace was slow and the work did not match pupils' abilities, leading to some low level disengagement.
114. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall, with some good features. The head of department has a clear vision for the subject, as set out in an impressive handbook that includes the departmental development plan. The major

challenge facing the department is to work together to see that operational systems are implemented, which will ensure the raising of standards through effective assessment procedures.

115. The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual and cultural development and provides many opportunities for them to consider issues of morality. It also makes a positive contribution to the school's citizenship programme. The use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning is currently underdeveloped, though it is becoming increasingly effective as a teaching tool. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department's leadership and management are good.
- The teachers' subject knowledge is good.
- Pupils' attitude to work in lessons is good.
- The use of assessment to help pupils make progress is good.
- There is insufficient challenge in the work planned for gifted and talented pupils.

Commentary

116. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above national expectations. Pupils show above average levels of skills and knowledge in lessons and are achieving high standards in their work. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above the national average. The GCSE results in 2004 showed a significant improvement from the previous year, due partly to the success of the department's 'catch-up' programme with underachieving pupils. Girls achieve significantly higher standards than boys.
117. Pupils' achievement in lessons is good. The majority make good use of their abilities to produce work of good quality. Their achievement is very good in textiles, food and systems and control lessons, where teachers have high expectations and the work is challenging. Pupils are well informed about their progress and are now developing a good understanding of how their work is assessed against National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9. There is insufficient opportunity for pupils to develop an understanding of the element of risk in designing and making, where they can evaluate and recognise why their ideas may not always work. In Years 10 and 11, pupils work to high standards in their GCSE portfolios, especially in textiles and food lessons, where they understand clearly how to improve their work to achieve their targets.
118. The quality of teaching is good. In the lessons observed, the quality ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge including ICT skills, and provide good role models for pupils in terms of relationships and attitudes to work. The majority of lessons are well planned and structured, with learning objectives which are shared with pupils. There is inconsistency in the use of learning objectives, some of which are focused on completing tasks. Pupils respond well in lessons, especially where teachers set a good pace and a sense of urgency matched to a timescale. In

Years 10 and 11, a significant number of boys working with resistant materials show a lack of urgency in planning their major projects.

119. The department's leadership is very good and provides a vision for development, shared with all staff. The overall management of the department and subject areas is good. The quality of subject documentation is very good and provides a good basis for achieving consistency in practice across the department. The existing monitoring processes are not developed enough to achieve consistency in expectations across all areas. Schemes of work are well structured and the content is good. Further improvements are needed to revise Year 7 to 9 projects, especially in resistant materials. The use of assessment is good and has some very good features in Years 7 to 9 that involve pupils in self-assessment. The accommodation is currently being refurbished successfully and has brought much required improvements so far. Display is very good in the refurbished rooms and is used well to support pupils' learning. The department needs to share its good practice in order to raise the quality in all areas to the level of the best.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very good standards by the end of Year 9.
- Standards at GCSE are well above average.
- Pupils in all years achieve well and make good progress.
- Teaching is very good.
- Accommodation is cramped for the size of classes in Years 7 to 9.
- Rooms are cluttered, and furnishings are shabby and archaic.
- The pottery studio is a health and safety hazard.

Commentary

120. Standards by the end of Year 9 are very good. Progress is good, because pupils are taught to develop skills in drawing, painting, sculpture and textiles and they have opportunities to explore the work of artists and designers from a wide range of cultures. Some slight underachievement is related to a rather mechanistic interpretation of the scheme of work and to large classes of over 30 pupils. It is not always possible to discuss pupils' work in sufficient depth to move them on, in the once-weekly hour-long lesson.

121. Standards in GCSE are well above average, because progress is sustained from Year 9. Achievement is good across all abilities, because pupils are given the confidence to research and develop ideas in a wide range of media in which they have become accomplished. Consequently, their explorations and completed work are very individual.

122. The quality of teaching is very good because there are clarity of expectation and a good scheme of work which supports pupils' progress, and teachers display an obvious love of their subject and enthusiasm for teaching. Pupils say they enjoy art. Lessons build progressively on pupils' previous learning enabling them to become

confident in technical skills and the exploration of ideas. Targets and good assessment in lessons are used well to support pupils in their quest for improvement. Pupils respond very well to the teaching. They display very good attitudes, are keen to research ideas and take pride in their work.

123. The leadership by the joint heads of department is effective, because their roles and responsibilities are clear. The strong commitment to improving standards and broadening pupils' experiences is shared by all in the department.
124. The pottery studio presents a health and safety hazard because there is too much flammable material stored too close to the kilns. The room is too cluttered and lacks sufficient storage, with the result that it cannot be cleaned adequately.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vision, aspirations and very good subject knowledge of the music staff have lifted the image of music in the school.
- Teaching and learning are good and often very good, enabling pupils to achieve well in all years and make very good progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Enrichment of the music curriculum is very good and contributes to its success.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not know sufficiently well how they are doing.
- The lack of adequate ICT and music technology hinders composition work and examination success.
- Accommodation is currently unsatisfactory, has an impact on standards and has not improved since the last inspection.

Commentary

125. At GCSE in 2004, in the grades A*-C, results were well above average and were similar to pupils' target grades. Results were related to the quality of pupils' instrumental performance and musicianship. Standards in lessons and work seen in Years 10 and 11 were above average. Due to the success of music teaching in Years 7 to 9 and the good instrumental teaching, the school is expanding the take-up of music to include many more pupils with good performance skills but less knowledge of writing music down. As a result the lack of opportunity to use music software and computers is having a negative impact on the standards obtained by these pupils, especially in their composition work.
126. Assessments undertaken by teachers showed standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 to be well above average. Standards seen in lessons confirm these standards. A significant number of Year 7 pupils already have instrumental experience. Ten per cent of the school population now takes instrumental lessons, on a variety of instruments. Pupils are encouraged to play their instruments in curriculum lessons; this lifts the quality of performance and understanding available to all pupils in Years 7 to 9.
127. Achievement is very good, as pupils make progress through Years 7 to 9, and is good in Years 10 and 11. High expectations, linked to the development of self-esteem, give all pupils the confidence to achieve and attain well. Positive reinforcement is balanced

by challenge where the ablest are constantly extending their expectation of themselves. All pupils bring to their lessons a generosity of spirit, which enables them to listen very well to other pupils and teachers. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils with special educational needs progress well and some very well.

128. Teaching and learning are good and in a third of lessons very good. Teaching is characterised by excellent relationships, where pupils feel confident enough to take musical risks. Teachers' expertise is both deep and broad. Singing has a high profile in the school, but the teaching of vocal skills is not sufficiently developed. Good learning was seen through listening and analysis, skill development, experiment, trial and error, ensemble and progressive refinement in all activities.
129. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the future. Consequent vitality and enthusiasm are hallmarks of provision. Assessment is good in Years 10 and 11. However, pupils do not yet have sufficient knowledge of their own learning and what to do to improve. The accommodation is too small and the high level of instrumental tuition means that practice rooms are rarely available, but a new performing arts block is planned. Although there are sufficient full-size keyboards, there is no tuned percussion.
130. Enrichment of the music curriculum is very good. In addition to the wide range of instrumental tuition, the samba band is well known and performs in national and local festivals. Other activities include jazz and rock bands, and choirs. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership and management are instrumental in devising strategies for improvement.
- Assessment for learning and target setting have a positive impact on raising attainment.
- Pupils have insufficient understanding of the levels and expectations in physical education.
- Teaching is very good in all year groups.

Commentary

131. GCSE results are well above average. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades is very high and generally pupils achieved better in physical education than in their other subjects. An increasing number of girls now take a GCSE examination. Large numbers of pupils study the Junior and Community Sports Leaders Awards in Years 10, 12 and 13.
132. Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9, where standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils in higher ability groups achieve standards that are above average. For example, in a Year 8 dance lesson, pupils were challenged to remember a difficult dance motif, to add to their dance with self-taught moves and to evaluate other pupils' work to enable them to improve. All pupils could recall and apply the teacher's expectations from the previous lesson and remained highly motivated and involved

throughout the lesson. Pupils with special needs are given appropriate tasks in line with their skills.

133. Achievement in core physical education in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. In GCSE practical and theory lessons achievement is good. Very good examples of written personal exercise programmes were seen, with evidence of extensive research completed at home.
134. Self-assessment and target setting by pupils have been introduced in all year groups. These strategies, together with teacher assessment, are supporting pupils' learning and motivating them to improve. However, pupils have insufficient understanding of what the levels mean, what the expectations are for each activity and what they have to do in order to improve their attainment.
135. Teaching is very good in all year groups. Teachers have a very good understanding of their subject and plan lessons well. Pupils are challenged at their level of competence and consequently the majority make good progress. Teachers manage the groups very well and pupils respond to the good relationships they have with their teachers. Pupils have very positive attitudes and show interest and enjoyment in their lessons. The department is involved in the School Sports Partnership and have developed strong links with feeder primary schools, the local leisure centre and sporting clubs. The extensive extra-curricular programme contributes well to the standards achieved.
136. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. There is a clear vision for future development and a focus on continuing to raise standards. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are usually average overall and A*-C grades above average.
- Whilst achievement is satisfactory in most years, the current Year 11 classes contain some low attainers who have great difficulty in meeting the standards necessary.
- Higher and average attaining pupils achieve well, but are distracted in some lessons by pupils who show little commitment to learning.
- Well-qualified and experienced teachers have high expectations and use a very good variety of teaching methods.
- Teachers illustrate lessons with very good links to examples in the real world.

Commentary

137. GCSE results have been mostly average, including the last two years, and results at grades A*-C are usually above average. Substantial numbers of pupils are entered for examinations in business studies and a much higher proportion in Year 11 than is the case in schools nationally. Results with pupils of wide ranging abilities represent satisfactory achievement in most years.

138. Standards in the current GCSE class in Year 11 are average overall and most pupils achieve satisfactorily. With this year group it is a continuing challenge for teachers to maintain the standards of previous years. Whilst a substantial proportion of more able pupils in Year 11 are on target to achieve the higher grades A*-C and are achieving well, there are significant numbers of low attaining pupils, especially pupils with special educational needs, who are struggling even with basic concepts, such as fixed and variable costs. Evidence from lessons and scrutiny of work show that more able pupils on GCSE courses easily reach above average standards in acquiring and applying knowledge. There are examples of work, such as arguing the case for or against adopting the euro, which would do credit to sixth form students. Current pupils in Year 10 are making a very good start to their course and, when questioned, were able to define concepts such as opportunity cost, factors of production and differences between the private and public sector which had been taught to them earlier in course.
139. Teaching is good, by well-qualified and experienced teachers. Completed work shows that teachers use a variety of methods and tasks to involve pupils and capture and retain interest with plenty of relevance to the real world. In a Year 10 lesson, in response to very good teaching, pupils were learning very well and understanding concepts of social benefits and social costs. They were able to apply that understanding very well to a hypothetical case study on the possible effects of an expansion of the Leeds Bradford airport. They were also very adept at using ICT to quickly produce a questionnaire to test possible public reaction. Teachers do not give up on any pupil and co-operate very well with heads of year when a pupil is underachieving or disrupting learning. There are examples, however, where the misbehaviour of pupils not only holds back their learning but also the learning of others in Year 11. There is a marked difference between the attitudes of pupils of above average and average attainment, who learn well, and some lower attainers whose learning is unsatisfactory. Learning is therefore only satisfactory overall despite the best efforts of teachers to overcome such barriers. ICT is well used by pupils, particularly for research.
140. Leadership and management of the department are very good overall when the sixth form is taken into account. A very positive feature of the department is its teamwork, the recognition of the strengths of individual members of the team. Schemes of work give a very good direction. There is a very good analysis of results by teaching group and good strategies to improve consistency. Improvement since the last inspection has been good as standards have been maintained in most years with the wider range of pupils now attracted to the subject.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make very good use of a range of resources to help pupils to gain a clearer understanding of difficult topics.
- Pupils' writing occasionally lacks sharpness and precision.
- Pupils demonstrate very good skills in ICT.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

141. Standards in GCSE are consistently well above the national average. Pupils achieve well, especially in their practical work. Written work varies from well above average to more modest levels, where pupils write too verbosely without getting to the nub of the question. There is a tendency to describe rather than to analyse, but pupils' attention to detail shows that they understand how the media has influence over different audiences. Teachers' marking helps pupils to improve over the course. Lively, well-managed classroom discussion also plays a part in making pupils more precise and succinct. In Year 11, pupils show clear thinking when discussing issues related to representation in the production of music videos. They remember important technical terminology and apply what they have learned when producing material of their own. Practical work is good. Skills ICT are well developed in both Years 10 and 11.
142. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers generate a very positive climate for learning by using varied approaches to lessons that are both practical and demanding. Questions are matched well to a pupil's ability and gifted and talented pupils are provided with chances to develop their knowledge even further, especially in the use of ICT. Relationships are relaxed and pupils are all well motivated, because they enjoy the work and see it as relevant.
143. There has been a focus on developing good resources such as books, videos and ICT. As a result, pupils gain a much clearer understanding of how to translate theory into practice. The department makes a valuable contribution to developing pupils' skills in literacy by emphasising clarity in expressing ideas, in both speech and writing. Pupils gain valuable social skills in working with others on demanding project work. They also learn about moral and cultural issues related to the representation of gender, racism and other important topics.
144. The quality of leadership is very good. This has enabled the department to develop a great deal since the last inspection. Teachers work closely together, keep abreast of new techniques and ideas, and have a good understanding of how to improve the subject further. Management is good but aspects of assessment, such as involving pupils more in their own target setting, are not fully developed. The department does, however, follow up on aspects of the course where there are comparative weakness in order to eradicate them.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

There is a coherent well-resourced programme in place delivered by a team of teachers in Years 7 to 11. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, though there is inconsistency because some teachers lack the appropriate confidence and expertise. Statutory requirements for the teaching of sex and health education and careers are met.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The development and introduction of the whole-school programme have been led and managed effectively.
- There is a well-planned and comprehensive scheme of work.
- Citizenship is not embedded across the curriculum.
- Pupils influence the decision-making process through effective year councils.

Commentary

145. Standards are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Pupils are given opportunities to develop their discussion and reasoning skills in lessons with much of the work being derived from video and worksheet stimuli. It was not possible to judge standards in Years 10 and 11 as no lessons were observed because of the two-week timetable. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils are interested and often motivated by the subject and their oral responses show that they are achieving well and making good progress. Teacher assessment shows that pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations.

146. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall although a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Years 7 to 9. In the best lessons, the teacher had planned the lesson well and provided a range of activities based on video material. Pupils responded with sensitivity and enthusiasm and learning was good or very good. Good examples were seen of teachers handling very sensitive issues in sex education skilfully, allowing pupils to express opinions and ask questions freely and without prejudice. Unsatisfactory teaching was the result of poor subject knowledge, lack of experience and poor behaviour management.

147. Co-ordination and leadership of the subject has recently been combined with personal, social and health education and is good. The comprehensive scheme of work is well planned and includes discrete units within four subjects, some cross-curricular themes and whole-school activity days. Management of the subject is satisfactory. There is a need to ensure that all subjects contribute to citizenship by developing a robust system for monitoring the subject.

148. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to experience citizenship particularly outside timetabled lessons in contexts such as the school councils, community service, peer mentoring schemes and links with the local special school.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 13 subjects or courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	6	33.3	80.1	0.0	23.7	6.7	29.9
Biology	6	66.7	65.2	16.7	11.1	20.0	20.6

Business studies	4	75.0	76.4	25.0	16.3	25.0	26.2
Chemistry	11	90.9	72.7	0.0	13.9	23.6	24.1
Communication studies	7	100.0	86.4	0.0	23.8	27.1	32.0
Drama	2	100.0	86.5	0.0	19.6	25.0	30.6
Economics	3	33.3	73.6	0.0	20.1	6.7	26.4
English/English language	2	100.0	82.9	0.0	17.5	35.0	28.7
English literature	3	33.3	85.9	0.0	19.1	6.7	30.2
French	2	50.0	78.2	50.0	18.9	25.0	27.6
Design and technology	6	100.0	74.9	16.7	15.1	33.3	25.3
General studies	58	58.6	73.9	0.0	17.8	12.8	25.7
Geography	16	37.5	74.3	0.0	19.8	10.0	26.5
German	5	80.0	81.5	0.0	19.3	18.0	28.9
History	8	75.0	80.7	12.5	19.5	28.8	28.6
Mathematics	16	25.0	61.9	6.3	17.1	6.9	22.1
Music	2	100.0	86.5	100.0	21.4	55.0	30.7
Other Social studies	14	71.4	69.7	21.4	16.7	21.4	24.1
Physics	10	50.0	68.6	0.0	14.4	11.0	22.7
Religious studies	4	75.0	80.2	25.0	22.6	25.0	29.8
Spanish	1	100.0	78.5	0.0	17.7	20.0	27.3
Sports/PE studies	7	57.1	73.2	0.0	11.4	17.1	23.1

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	12	100.0	98.6	50.0	50.2	81.7	87.5
Biology	15	100.0	96.4	33.3	39.2	78.7	78.6
Business studies	21	100.0	98.7	57.1	36.8	92.4	80.1
Chemistry	11	100.0	97.6	18.2	49.0	72.7	84.9
Communication studies	15	100.0	99.4	40.0	37.8	88.0	82.1
Drama	7	100.0	99.5	14.3	40.1	74.3	83.6
Economics	6	100.0	98.9	33.3	52.0	80.0	88.3
English/English language	26	100.0	99.4	34.6	36.3	82.3	80.9
English literature	17	100.0	99.5	47.1	46.5	87.1	86.5
French	2	100.0	98.8	100.0	51.5	100.0	87.6
Design and technology	20	100.0	97.8	40.0	35.0	89.0	77.9
General studies	48	100.0	94.7	18.8	31.0	69.6	73.1

Geography	16	81.3	98.7	18.8	44.5	60.0	84.0
German	1	100.0	98.4	0.0	47.9	80.0	84.8
History	17	100.0	99.0	47.1	44.6	84.7	84.6
Mathematics	8	100.0	96.7	37.5	55.6	72.5	88.8
Other Social studies	41	100.0	97.4	51.2	42.7	87.3	81.8
Physics	9	100.0	96.7	22.2	44.6	68.9	81.7
Religious studies	5	80.0	98.8	40.0	46.7	72.0	85.6
Spanish	6	100.0	98.3	50.0	50.2	86.7	86.9
Sports/PE studies	8	100.0	98.0	25.0	30.9	67.5	75.2
Business	7	100.0	65.0	0.0	146	51.4	60.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are good.
- Skilled staff provide good teaching.
- Well-motivated students are committed to their learning.
- Planning and assessment are good.

Commentary

149. Standards in English are good and the department has regularly achieved good results in A-level examinations. A dip in the provisional results for English language and literature in 2004 was a disappointment to the experienced staff responsible for the cohort. An analysis of outcomes identified the module that students found hardest and additional attention is being given to this aspect for 2005. In lessons seen and work scrutinised standards were good, indicating that students are on track to attain well.
150. Achievement is also good, as progress scores generally demonstrate, with students making good progress from GCSE to A-level work. They also achieve well in lessons, applying analytical skills to new texts in a reflective and incisive way.
151. Teaching in AS and A-level lessons is good and enables staff and students to explore complex meanings together. Wide-ranging discussion in work on Shakespeare in Year 12 and poetry in Year 13 was carefully planned to reinforce previous learning, while helping students gain insight into different levels of meaning in difficult texts. Teachers have very good questioning skills that reinforce learning effectively. Very good development of specialist vocabulary enables students to comment on texts with precision. Lessons are well structured and varied. Assessment of written work is good at this stage, with careful and helpful commentaries helping students to improve.
152. The single lesson taught by a short-term supply teacher benefited from well-prepared materials and good briefing, enabling satisfactory standards to be reached.
153. Students bring a committed, hardworking approach to bear and their learning reflects this. Written work is often of a high standard and they work well with their peers, helping each other make good progress. However, students show a reluctance to challenge and question.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

154. In the sixth form students demonstrate very good standards in spoken English and a good standard in their reading and writing. Departments succeed in helping Year 12 students develop the range of literacy skills they need to achieve well at AS and A-level standards. Teachers support them in developing an appropriate range of styles in their written work. Students have a good capacity to contribute to discussions and presentations in a formal context and contribute very well in small group discussions.

They have a good grasp of specialist language, apply their knowledge well in new contexts and have a good awareness of writing appropriately for a range of purposes.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and leads to good learning.
- New subject leadership has raised expectations.
- Students have little contact with native speakers of French.

Commentary

155. In the A-level examinations of 2004 there were 10 candidates, compared with two the previous year. Provisional results were in line with the national average for grades A and B and above average for A-E.

156. All AS-level students of 2003 had continued with the subject, and the number obtaining A grades had increased. AS results in 2004 were above average. Seven of the 11 candidates had grades A or B. None was below grade D.

157. Measures of students' progress indicate that the 2004 cohort made progress broadly in line with expectations. Progress in the previous two years had been good, albeit with small numbers of students. Prior to 2002, measures of progress languished amongst the lowest 30 per cent of schools nationally. This is a clear indication of the impact of a new subject leader, who subsequently became head of department.

158. Analysis of students' written work confirms that they achieve well by maintaining and in some cases improving the high standards with which they began the course. Standards seen were above average. Well over half the students in both year groups had begun advanced studies with A* or A grades in GCSE. Students in Year 13 can write French at an appropriate level for the highest two grades at A-level, and high level French language discussion was observed, for example on Third World poverty.

159. All this is because students are well taught by two staff with complementary teaching styles. These teachers know that the students share their high standards, because they seek formal feedback. Relaxed relationships contribute to increasing students' confidence. Year 13 students had important cultural experience by attending as a group an international conference held in Paris on the future of Europe, but there is as yet no opportunity for work experience in France and no access in school to French language television.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average at the end of Year 12.
- Good competence in numeracy and literacy, and excellent attitudes towards learning are helping students to learn effectively.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations.

- There is good leadership and management, with a few weaknesses in monitoring aspects of teaching and learning.

Commentary

160. Recruitment into Year 12 and retention into Year 13 are improving, especially amongst female students. Nearly one in six students in the sixth form takes mathematics. Changes in the structure of course arrangements and very good GCSE top grade (A*/A) successes in 2004 have influenced this growth. Lessons in pure mathematics, further mathematics, mechanics and decision mathematics were observed during the inspection. A few students follow statistics, but teaching of this topic did not take place during the week of the inspection.
161. Achievement is satisfactory. Students, especially those on AS courses in Year 12, are making good progress. In 2004, standards at the end of Year 12 were well above the national average. The small number of girls did not perform as well as boys. There was a significant improvement over the relatively poor results of the previous two years where there was a high incidence of underachievement. In the same year at the end of Year 13, standards were close to the national average. Students' achievement is improving, largely because they assimilate new mathematical ideas well by building on previously very secure knowledge and understanding. Student competence in the use of mathematics is good and this is put to effective use when extending learning into uncharted areas. Students have good levels of speaking and listening, which they use well when answering questions, making class presentations and co-operating in joint problem-solving exercises. The strong levels of numeracy and literacy are significant factors in helping students to make good gains in learning.
162. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Significant strengths in the teaching arise from the teachers' very good command of the subject content, the high expectations they have of the students and the excellent attitudes the students have towards learning. Teachers expect high standards of application from the students, which they obtain through careful planning, rigorous questioning and providing well for independent learning. Assessment is used effectively to inform students of the progress they are making and to set high, yet achievable, targets.
163. Leadership and management are good. Close teamwork, by a group of teachers well matched to the students' needs and committed to improving standards and raising achievement, is providing students with consistency in learning. Recent changes in the AS and A2 course structure have been managed well and these have increased the popularity of mathematics amongst higher attaining students. The department is well poised to adjust to any future curricular changes. Lessons are managed efficiently and students enjoy mature and relaxed relationships with teachers who provide good role models for their personal, social and academic development. Students are encouraged to monitor their own performance, aided by teachers who evaluate their work thoroughly and set demanding, yet realistic, targets for improvement. The few students who are underachieving, or who have difficulty in taking greater responsibility for their own learning, are effectively counselled to help their improvement. Performance data is well monitored and used. However, there is less rigour in monitoring aspects of teaching and learning to assist in raising standards further. The few issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. Recent improvements, as seen in rising standards, more relevant curricular options and increasing recruitment and retention, are good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

164. Students' competence in mathematics is good. They use mathematical notation, terms and techniques correctly and accurately to solve equations, to transpose formulae and to draw and interpret graphs. They use thinking skills well to solve problems and carry out mental calculation, usually with speed and accuracy. Students' good skills in using calculators and ICT help them to develop their numerical skills further. They extend their learning by transferring knowledge and understanding to new ideas when given opportunities in other subjects. Good use of students' numerical skills is made in mathematics, science, design and technology, art, media studies, geography, history and business studies. The school provides a key skills course for some students who are not following AS and A2 courses in mathematics and who need stronger numeracy skills to progress their learning in other subjects. There is also a GCSE course for students who have obtained a lower than expected grade in Year 11 GCSE and who might find access to chosen careers improved by high grades.

SCIENCE

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a degree of underachievement in students' standards of attainment.
- There is unevenness in the quality of teaching.
- When teaching is clear and encouraging in manner students respond well and show enthusiasm for the subject.

Commentary

165. Students' standards of attainment at A-level have been variable in recent years, ranging from below average to well above average. Standards of attainment at AS-level have generally been average. Recent examination results show that many students have achieved in line with their capabilities. However, there has been evidence of underachievement and this was particularly the case in the 2004 examinations, in which there was a notable level of underachievement both at A-level and AS-level.

166. Lessons observed during the inspection indicate that students are working at an average standard. In response to questions, some students demonstrated above average knowledge and understanding of the subject. All students were able to explain the work in they were engaged. There was no evidence of underachievement. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Some variation in the quality of teaching was observed, with the best teaching demonstrating good organisation and a clear and encouraging presentation of work. In such circumstances, students responded well and were willing to discuss their work with confidence and commitment. Where teaching resulted in less clarity in the presentation of work, students were quiet and needed much coaxing to put forward their own ideas.

167. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of the accommodation since the time of the last inspection. The chemistry department has maintained good standards in students' attainment since that time. The challenge remaining to the department is to ensure that there is no measure of underachievement in students' future examination results.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The course is well chosen to meet the need of the students.
- Teaching is good, enabling students to work with independence to expected standards.
- A small number of students successfully completed key skills IT in 2004.

Commentary

168. The provision of AVCE ICT in the sixth form is a recent development. It is an appropriate course for students, and its introduction is well timed to coincide with the first pupils leaving Year 11 in 2004 having taken GNVQ ICT. There is currently one group of students pursuing this course in Year 12.
169. Teaching is good, providing students with individual guidance while they work independently, using the learning resources provided on the school network. Students' work is well presented and structured, including informed evaluation by the students and their peers. Teachers' questions are constructed to prompt thoughtful responses from students, although there is limited written feedback.
170. All students in Year 12 have the opportunity to study key skills, linked to the general studies course. In 2004, less than 20 students successfully gained the key skills qualification, although most sat the test.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

171. There is specific provision of ICT equipment for students in Years 12 and 13 to complement that provided in subject areas. The embedding of ICT in classroom practice varies from subject to subject. For example, very good use of interactive whiteboards by students was observed in history, but this was not seen in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at A-level and AS-level were low in 2003.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and commitment.
- The assessment of students' learning is good.
- Students are often passive learners with few opportunities to demonstrate their skills as geographers. Many opportunities for independent learning are consequently missed.
- The department develops most effectively students' questioning and analytical skills.
- The development of students' language skills, particularly in respect of speaking and listening through cross-curricular literacy, is a strength of the department.
- ICT as a teaching tool is a strength across the department.

Commentary

172. Provision in the sixth form is good. However, standards are a cause for concern and results achieved at both AS and A-level are well below national expectation. At A-level in 2003, students achieved 29 per cent below national benchmarks. This result is well below expectations based on students' prior attainment at Key Stage 4. However, the trend over three years is improving and the department recognises the seriousness of the issue and now has a relevant action plan to remedy the situation. Most students who opt for A-level geography have achieved A*-C at GCSE and so would be expected to achieve a high level of attainment.

173. Overall, teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. On such occasions the best teaching and learning involve a high level of interaction between teacher and students, who are confident speakers with a good range of subject-specific vocabulary. Effective teaching also involves the use of a range of resources that stimulates debate and inspires critical thinking. In such lessons quality learning is assured and progress measurable. Where teaching and learning are less effective, teachers lead too much; teachers' expectations of students appear low and passive learning predominates. In such lessons there were many missed opportunities for students to engage in independent research and to take responsibility for their own learning. Such situations are the exception, however.
174. Students know what is expected of them in lessons. Commitment and attitude to learning of all students are very good indeed. Students consistently demonstrate a very positive attitude to learning and clearly enjoy geography. High teacher expectation and positive relationships across the department ensure that a focused and supportive learning environment prevails in lessons.
175. Assessment is good, with diagnostic marking identifying strengths and weaknesses and offering appropriate strategies for improvement. Students are clear about their current level of performance, their target grade and what they need to do to improve. To this end, the department encourages students to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
176. The head of department has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards in geography in the sixth form.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have significant expertise as historians.
- Students can occasionally be passive learners.
- Students are coached expertly, ensuring success.
- Assessment is very good with diagnostic marking ensuring students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and of appropriate strategies for improvement.

Commentary

177. Entries in 2004 achieved 100 per cent pass rate at both AS and A2. The average points score for students indicates this result is in line with schools nationally, based on prior attainment at GCSE. The trend over three years is good. Overall, achievement is good, with students making sound progress.
178. Teaching is good and sometimes excellent. The best teaching and learning are characterised by high levels of involvement and interaction between teacher and the students, who are confident speakers with a good range of subject-specific vocabulary. Effective teaching incorporates the good use of a range of historical sources and resources, which stimulates debate and inspires critical thinking. In such lessons quality learning is assured and progress measurable. Where teaching and learning are less effective, there is a more teacher-directed approach and passive learning predominates.

179. Teachers make excellent use of the interactive whiteboard, video clips and photographic images, thus enriching students' appreciation and understanding of the period, places and personalities under study. Students consistently demonstrate a positive attitude to learning and clearly enjoy history. High teacher expectations and positive relationships across the department ensure a learning environment which is both supportive and challenging.
180. Teachers develop students' skills in writing with flair and confidence and use appropriate methodology to help students to understand exactly what will be expected of them in the examinations. Assessment is very good; marking is sophisticated and very helpful. Written and oral feedback identifies strengths and weaknesses and offers appropriate strategies for improvement. Students are clear as to their current level of performance, their target grade and what they need to do to improve.
181. The head of department and his team have a clear understanding of how to maintain and further improve the already high standards in history post-16. The subject remains a very popular choice for students and its success is testimony to the dedicated and highly skilled staff. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in product design leads to good attainment.
- Assessment, including student self-assessment, is a strength.
- Students' take-up of design and technology in the sixth form is low.

Commentary

182. Attainment in design and technology is good and has improved in recent years. A significant number of students exceeded predicted A-level grades based on their prior attainment at the end of Year 11.

183. The quality of students' design work and graphical presentation is good. They use a range of materials and carry out manufacturing processes with confidence.

184. The quality of teaching in product design is good. Lessons are well planned and offer well-matched challenge. Students make good progress in lessons and are given appropriate support in the planning and evaluation of their work. The subject is effectively led and managed. There are well-written schemes of work and excellent assessment procedures, including students' self-assessment. Take-up of design technology in the sixth form has been erratic in recent years and was poor in 2004, particularly for a technology college.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average at A-level.
- Teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Accommodation, to enable students to pursue practical work independently out of lesson time, is poor.

Commentary

185. Standards in the sixth form are good and have improved since the last inspection. A-level results are above average and a good proportion of students achieve high grades.

186. The high standards achieved in examinations are reflected in work seen in lessons and in students' portfolios. Students achieve well and make good progress from AS to A-level, where their developing expertise in a wide range of media and manipulation of

digital imagery are used to good effect in the exploration of ideas. Students develop their own style and interests, and there were numerous good examples of paintings, sculptures and mixed-media pieces arising from their research and development of Pop Art, movement and architectural space.

187. Learning is very good, because students are well supported by their teachers, who have very good knowledge, skills and imagination. Students are confident to experiment, and use ICT well to research artists and art movements and to manipulate images. Their critical analysis of the work of other students, artists and their own is developing well and they discuss their ideas with confidence.
188. The quality of teaching is very good. Assignments are well designed and students clearly understand the criteria upon which they will be assessed. Students are given regular evaluations so that they are aware of the progress they are making. Teachers are demanding, supportive and enthusiastic. They look beyond the classroom to give students opportunities to apply art and design to the real world, through work-related assignments and competitions.
189. An outstanding weakness continuing from the last inspection is the lack of adequate studio space for students to pursue their practical work outside of lesson times.
190. Leadership and management are good. The scheme of work builds progressively on knowledge, skills and techniques to give students a good all-round experience in art and design. The high standards achieved and the genuine interest of the students are testimony to the good leadership and management of the subject.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently among the best in the school and practical productions are very good.
- Teachers' excellent subject expertise encourages students to work hard and to achieve well.
- Teachers utilise a range of very good resources to help students to gain a clearer understanding of difficult topics.
- There is a high level of sophisticated debate in lessons.
- Assessment is underdeveloped.

Commentary

191. Students achieve well in media studies with all of them gaining at least an E grade and a good proportion gaining the higher grades A or B at AS and A-level. Results compare very well with other subjects in the school. In Year 12 students have a good knowledge of film production and apply this knowledge well, when analysing particular scenes. They recognise key media techniques and understand clearly the meaning of technical terminology. They are developing good background to help them to understand how cultural, social and historical factors influence film-making. In Year 13, students produce high quality practical work showing good awareness of how to utilise different techniques to enhance video production. They are not afraid to experiment with new

ideas. Their accompanying written work is detailed and often shows keen analytical skills.

192. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. Students have every confidence in their teachers because of the excellent subject knowledge they possess. Relationships are excellent; students are prepared to think for themselves and to participate fully in discussions. They debate important questions about morality, as depicted in film and television, with insight that often belies their years. No student is allowed to opt out of discussion and teachers promote inclusion very strongly. Questions from teachers are persistent and demanding but this spurs students on to greater efforts. Teachers use a good range of resources to generate lively discussions and to illustrate a variety of media techniques. Marking is good but students are not consistently involved in assessing their own progress.

193. Leadership is very good indeed. The subject has developed very well over recent years and has a high profile in the school. As a result the team ethos is very good and teachers are prepared to learn from each other. The monitoring of teaching and learning is largely informal, but effective, and good practice is shared occasionally during team-teaching sessions. The management of the department is good. Teachers refer to examination data when revising their future course planning. There have been many innovations and improvements since the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good.
- Students achieve well because of good teacher knowledge and teaching strategies.
- Marking is good and helps students to understand their progress.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.

Commentary

194. Results in the A-level examination were below average, with 11 students taking the examination. Achievement at AS level is good. However, the students who progress to A-level produce results that are below expectations. For several students, the practical elements and the coursework are their strongest areas. Students use word processing effectively and show pride in their work. Marking of work is good, with positive and constructive comments that enable students to reflect on their work and to present a more coherent argument.

195. Teaching is very good and teachers have a high level of subject knowledge. There is a well-established mentoring scheme to support students throughout the course. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students remain interested and highly motivated throughout lessons.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in various examinations offered in the sixth form are usually above average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students have justified confidence in their teachers and are very well motivated.
- Leadership and management are very good and a well-integrated team helps to share the workload.

Commentary

196. Results at AS-level in business studies have been mainly above average. Numbers entered increased in 2004 and this trend has continued with 34 students following the course in Year 12. Results at A-level were well above average in 2002 and 2003 but fell to below average in 2004. Student retention rates are very good, at both AS and A-level. Seven students studying business studies at A-level in Year 13 are also following a pilot course leading to Diploma in Financial Studies, having completed the Certificate in Financial Studies very successfully when in Year 12. All students on the one-year GNVQ intermediate course in business studies in 2004 were successful and three gained merits.
197. Standards in current classes are above average in AS-level business studies with students achieving well. At A-level, standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Three students following a one-year GNVQ intermediate course in business studies in Year 12 are achieving well in relation to their previous GCSE results. High standards are being maintained in the Certificate in Financial Studies course. Overall achievement across a wide range of courses is good.
198. Nearly all students are very competent in acquiring and using knowledge. They apply that knowledge well to case studies and simulations. Levels of numerical competence are good. The financial aspects of courses are taught very well and this helps students enormously. Students are skilled in using ICT for research and presentation of work in all courses. In lessons, discussion skills are good and most students write swiftly and accurately. There is an invaluable and continuing drive by teachers to improve and refine students' examination techniques.
199. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good and there are some excellent features. Well-qualified and extremely well-informed teachers are at ease with their subjects and give confidence to students. GNVQ students are picking up a good understanding of basic terminology, reinforced and made meaningful through exploring the benefits and challenges of setting up their own real business project. Teachers' expectations are very high and students are kept on their toes through well-directed questions to stretch all abilities. Feedback to students is very good with praise given where merited and students left in no doubt where they are underachieving. A very good example of written feedback was seen with the current Year 12 Certificate in Financial Studies class with a brief written synopsis summarising individual strengths and weaknesses of each student following presentations to the class. This was accompanied by precise targets for improvement. There is very good and regular use of case studies.

200. Leadership and management are very good and there is high quality teamwork in the department. The head of department is playing a prominent role in the initiative to develop the Certificate and Diploma courses in Financial Studies nationally. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. With more than 90 students studying business or business-related subjects in the sixth form, the department makes an excellent contribution to broadening the curriculum of the school.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have consistent success in AS and A-level examinations.
- Teaching is very good because teachers have very good subject knowledge and present lessons that interest students.
- Teachers have high expectations and provide very good challenge for students.
- Leadership of the subject is very good but management would benefit from greater analysis of examination results.
- The use of ICT to support students' learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

201. The subject has been introduced into the sixth form since the previous inspection. Standards attained in A-level examinations since 2001 have improved and are above the national average, although reduced slightly in 2004. Consistently large groups start the AS-level course in Year 12 but in the last two years reducing numbers have gone on to take A-level, with approximately half of students not progressing from AS to A-level. Both the department and the students confirm that this was to do with difficulties in turnover of staffing at that time. This situation is now resolved with the appointment of a permanent member of staff. In Year 13, students' achievement is good, based on their results at AS-level.

202. Teaching and learning are very good overall. All lessons were at least good and three were very good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned, with clear objectives which are shared with the students. This leads to good changes of activity that keep students interested and involved. Teachers have very high expectations of the students, shown by the challenging level of questioning used. Lessons are organised very well and the groups are organised efficiently to enable effective group and individual work.

203. Very good working relationships exist between students and their teachers, based on mutual respect and good humour. The curriculum is enhanced by the use of imaginative tasks that students enjoy. They participate enthusiastically in practical activities and are interested, because the teachers show the relevance of the psychology being taught. Assessment is very good and the students state that they value the informative comments made on their work, which provide information to help them to improve. The rapid assessment carried out at the end of each lesson ensures a clear picture of students' understanding, so that attention is given without delay.

204. Scrutiny of previous work shows that students complete a wide range of tasks. Teachers set tasks that require them to research particular topics and have opportunities to develop the skills of speculation and sustaining arguments. Although they do use ICT at times, it is not used routinely in their work, to aid research, nor by the staff to present knowledge in a visual way, to support teaching and learning effectively.
205. Leadership of the subject is very good. The subject leader is very enthusiastic and has a very clear vision of improving the subject. She motivates other staff in the department and they share her vision. Management of the subject is good, but would benefit from greater analysis of trends and results in the subject over recent years. Accommodation is pleasant, but is cramped when used by some of the larger groups. Resources are good but would benefit from more computer resources linked to the Internet and an increase in textbooks in the library.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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