

INSPECTION REPORT

BISHOP ULLATHORNE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Coventry

LEA area: Coventry

Unique reference number: 103742

Headteacher: Miss J Byrne

Lead inspector: Dr K C Thomas

Dates of inspection: 18 – 21 October 2004

Inspection number: 268751

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1069
School address:	Leasowes Avenue Green Lane Coventry
Postcode:	CV3 6BH
Telephone number:	024 7641 4515
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs C Dumbleton
Date of previous inspection:	2 November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bishop Ullathorne School is an 11-18 Roman Catholic comprehensive school. There are 916 pupils in the main school and 154 students in the sixth form. This makes the school about the same size as most other schools with sixth forms. The school provides for pupils across the ability range, though attainment on entry is now average overall. Although there are slight differences in some year groups the proportions of boys and girls in the school are roughly equal. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average, while the proportion of pupils with statements is below average. Pupils with the highest levels of need mostly have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), emotional and behavioural difficulties or speech and communication difficulties. About ten per cent of the pupils have minority ethnic backgrounds. Around 12 different minority ethnic groups are represented in the school and so there is no significantly large sub-group. While many of these pupils are bilingual, none are in the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The school received a School Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector	
10905	Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Science Chemistry (sixth form)
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	Theatre studies (sixth form)
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology
1240	John King	Team inspector	Art and design Art and design (sixth form)
11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
19152	Richard Merryfield	Team inspector	History Sociology (sixth form)
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Citizenship Music
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	Physical education
15971	Michael Pye	Team inspector	History (sixth form)
11300	Barry Smith	Team inspector	Special educational needs Geography
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15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	English as an additional language English English (sixth form)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This effective school provides good value for money. The very good leadership of the headteacher ensures that the school provides a good quality of education for all pupils. Standards in National Curriculum tests and in the GCSE examination are average. Standards at A-level are below average. Teaching and learning are good. Achievement is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's clear sense of purpose and determined leadership ensure that there is a continuous drive to raise standards.
- Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. However, pupils' are not provided with enough independent learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11.
- Because increasingly effective use is made of assessment information to set pupils targets and to monitor their progress, results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations are rising faster than results nationally.
- Standards in art are not as high as they should be at the end of Year 11.
- The recently restructured senior management team is effectively supporting school improvement. However, although members of the team operate effectively as individuals they do not yet share a common vision of the direction in which they need to lead the school.
- Good support and guidance promote good attitudes and behaviour. These contribute significantly to the positive ethos of the school.
- Procedures for identifying and making provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- Although attendance has improved it is still below average.
- Some statutory requirements are not being met in modern foreign languages, design and technology and citizenship.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. All of the identified shortcomings have been tackled vigorously. School management is more effective because procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have improved. The headteacher and governors have a much clearer overview of the school's performance and strategic planning has improved. Teaching and learning have improved and more effective use is made of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and raise standards. Although provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved, not enough use is being made of ICT to support teaching and learning in several subjects. The school is about to occupy new computer suites that will help to tackle this issue.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

The achievement of all groups of pupils is good in Years 7 to 11 and **satisfactory in the sixth form.** There is no significant difference in achievement by gender or by ethnicity. The 2004 National Curriculum test results were similar to those obtained in 2003 (the latest year for which national comparisons are available), when they were average overall. The 2003 results in English were above average, while those in mathematics and science were average. The GCSE examination results in 2004 were above those obtained in 2003, when

they were average overall. These results exceeded the school's target for the year group. The 2004 A-level results were above those obtained in 2003, when they were well below average overall.

Pupils' personal development, including their moral and social development, is good. Their spiritual and cultural development is very good. Pupils have positive attitudes and most behave well in lessons and around the school. This makes for a generally harmonious learning environment. Attendance is below average. Most pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good overall throughout the school. Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. The school provides good support, advice and guidance. The curriculum is good and the school is beginning to broaden pathways for all from the start of Year 10. Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and for gifted and talented pupils. Provision to enrich pupils' learning outside lessons is good. Pupils' learning benefits considerably from the good partnerships that have been established with parents, the community and other schools and colleges. Because of difficulties in recruitment there have been weaknesses in staffing in a few subjects. Accommodation is satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher provides a strong driving force within the school. Members of the senior management team carry out their roles effectively and middle managers are now more accountable for performance in their areas. Governance of the school is good and almost all statutory requirements are met. The only breaches of statutory requirements are the provision of opportunities for pupils to communicate with native foreign language speakers in modern foreign languages, the use of ICT in design and technology, and the reporting of standards in citizenship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally satisfied with the school and what it provides for their children. They judge that their children are making good progress. Some do not feel that enough homework is set and that they are not well informed about how their children are getting on. Neither of these issues is substantiated by inspection evidence. Pupils and students feel that it is a good school and have positive views about many aspects.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Provide pupils in Years 10 and 11, and sixth form students, with more independent learning opportunities
- Raise standards in art in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that members of the senior management team share a common vision of the direction in which they need to lead the school.
- Continue to implement strategies to improve attendance.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that statutory requirements are fully met in modern foreign languages, design and technology and citizenship.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective sixth form and one in which students receive a good quality of education. Achievement is satisfactory. Examination results, which overall are below average, reflect students' attainment levels on entry in Year 12. Very good leadership and management have secured significant improvement since the last inspection. Guidance and support have improved, as have attendance and punctuality. Good teaching and learning, together with the effective use of assessment information, are underpinning a rise in standards. The sixth form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. There is a clear vision for the future, and more rigorous procedures for monitoring attendance and performance support the drive to raise standards.
- Through its membership of the South-West Coventry Federation the school is able to offer a good range of courses that meets the needs of a wide range of students.
- Students display positive attitudes to school but many have yet to develop the independent skills generally associated with study at this level.
- Because teaching, support and guidance are good, most students obtain the qualifications necessary to pursue their career intentions.
- Recruitment and staffing difficulties in science have impeded the drive to raise standards.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English. Students are achieving well because teaching is good and students' individual needs are met. Leadership and management are very good and good use is made of assessment information.
Mathematics	Good. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Good, enthusiastic teaching leads to good learning.
Science	Satisfactory in chemistry. Although examination results were below expectations they are now improving because staffing issues have been resolved. Teaching is good and leadership and management are good.
Humanities	Good in sociology. The subject is attracting increasing numbers who achieve well as a result of good teaching. There is spirited discussion of complex issues because of very good classroom relationships. Good in history. Students achieve well because of consistently good teaching.
Business	Good in business studies. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching. Numbers taking the subject are rising, a reflection of a well-led department.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good in theatre studies. Standards are below average but achievement is satisfactory because teachers work hard to encourage students to become independent learners. Satisfactory in art. Standards are below average. Teaching is good but does not sufficiently encourage students to take the initiative in

their work.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Sixth formers are provided with good advice, guidance and support. Their academic progress and personal development are very well monitored and they receive good support from their teachers. This is contributing to the improving progress students are making in the sixth form. Arrangements for coping with the demands of operating between the schools in the federation are generally effective. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The establishment of clear procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic and personal development are helping students to attain their career goals, which for many begin with entry to higher education. Assessment and other management information are being used with increasing effect to set targets, monitor and evaluate progress and identify action to be taken to address and rectify weaknesses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

The vast majority of students enjoy being in the sixth form and appreciate the efforts of the head of sixth form and their teachers. They consider that teaching is challenging and they value the subject expertise of their teachers. They value the accessibility and support from their teachers. Students say that help is always available when they need it. Some concerns were expressed in the responses to the student questionnaire, in particular about careers advice and the way the school responds to their views. However, in discussions during the inspection students agreed that careers advice is available to those who seek it out and that through the sixth form committee, which is an active body, they are able to make a real contribution to the sixth form.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Examination and test results over time show a rapidly improving trend. Achievement is good at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. At the end of Year 9, standards in English and mathematics are above average, while those in science are average. The 2003 GCSE results were average and achievement was satisfactory. However, the 2004 results were above those obtained in 2003 and above the school's target for the year group. These results represent good achievement. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory. The 2004 results are above those obtained in 2003, which were well below average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test and examination results are rising at a faster rate than results nationally and are well above average when compared with those achieved in schools in similar socio-economic circumstances.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 11 because of very good teaching and high expectations.
- Unsatisfactory provision in art limits pupils' achievement, and particularly that of boys, in Years 10 and 11.
- The difference between the performance of girls and boys in English and mathematics at the end of Year 9 is greater than that observed nationally
- Most sixth form students obtain the examination results necessary to pursue their career ambitions.
- Achievement in the sixth form is impeded by weak independent study skills.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.6 (34.0)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.6 (34.7)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.3 (33.3)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 211 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The standards of attainment of the present Year 7, although covering the full attainment range, are average overall. This has not been the case in all years since the last inspection. In most of these years standards on entry have been below average.
2. The trend in the school's National Curriculum test results was above the rate at which the national results rose from 1999 to 2003. In 2003 (the latest year for which national comparative information is available), the results were average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools based on prior attainment (these are schools in which pupils attained similar standards at the end of Year 6). In comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances, results were well above average. When standards of attainment on entry are taken into account these results represent good achievement. The school met the targets set for 2004, when the results were similar to those obtained in 2003. These results again represented good achievement. The 2003 results in English were above average, while those in mathematics and science were average. In comparison with similar schools based on prior attainment, the results were above average in English, but below average in mathematics and well below in science. In comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances results were well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. The 2004 results in science and mathematics were similar to those obtained in 2003, while the results in English were slightly below. In 2003, girls outperformed boys in English and mathematics by a greater margin than

that observed nationally. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in science. Analyses of performance show that the performance of pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds is comparable to that of their peers.

3. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 because the National Key Stage 3 strategy is being implemented effectively and there is a substantial proportion of good and better teaching that inspires the pupils to do well. Teaching also takes good account of the needs of gifted and talented pupils and those of pupils with special educational needs. In addition, pupils' progress is underpinned by the effective use of assessment information for target setting and monitoring. The school is evaluating the progress of groups and individuals so that support can be better focused to prevent underachievement. Similar strengths in provision are seen in Years 10 and 11 and as a result, achievement is also good at the end of Year 11.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	51 (51)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.3 (34.2)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 200 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. GCSE results have also risen at a faster rate than results nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades has risen from below average in 2000, to average in 2003. Value-added measures, based on pupils' test performance at the end of Year 9, show that the achievement of this cohort of pupils was satisfactory. However, there was a significant rise in the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades in 2004 when the school exceeded the target set for the year group. The 2004 results also show a rise in the percentage of pupils obtaining the highest A* and A grades. Given that virtually all pupils obtained five or more A* to G grades, this is a good indication that the school provides equally well for pupils of all attainment levels.
5. In 2003 the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades was above average in double award science (the examination that most pupils take), design and technology, geography, German, home economics, ICT and music, and average in English language, English literature, mathematics, drama and history. These results were below average in art, business studies, French and physical education. In 2004, there was a rise in the percentage of pupils gaining higher grades in English literature, double award science, French, geography, history and physical education. In most other subjects the 2004 results were similar to those obtained in 2003. This percentage also rose in art, although it remained below the 2003 national average. The 2004 higher grade results in business studies, design and technology and drama were slightly below those obtained in 2003. Girls outperformed boys in all subjects other than double award science, where boys outperformed girls, and history and music, where results were about the same. The differences in performance between boys and girls generally reflect differences in performance observed nationally. However, in art and ICT, girls outperform boys at the higher grade levels by a significant margin.

6. Inspection evidence indicates a continued rise in standards, which are judged to be above national expectations in most subjects in Years 10 and 11. Standards are in line with expectations in English and mathematics, and above in science. Only in art are standards below expectations.
7. Pupils' literacy and numeracy levels are used to good effect in subjects across the curriculum. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because procedures for identifying and supporting pupils are very effective. They receive good teaching in subjects and very good specialist support and guidance. All of the very few pupils with English as an additional language are fluent English language speakers and achieve as well as others in their classes. The school provides a wide programme of extension activities for pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented. They benefit considerably from these activities. These pupils achieve well in their academic subjects and this achievement is enhanced further through the programme.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	84.8 (90.3)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	20.0 (26.0)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	184.3 (220.5)	258.2 (263.5)

There were 46 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. The 2003 A-level examination results were well below average overall. In subjects where the number of entries was large enough to make comparisons with national averages, results were above average in sociology, average in history, below average in business studies, English, information technology and psychology, and well below average in art and geography. However, virtually all candidates obtained pass grades and achievement was satisfactory when students' attainment at the end of Year 11 is taken into account. Reflecting national differences in performance, the performance of female students in 2003 was above that of males. The 2004 results show a rise in the percentage of students gaining higher A or B grades. A-level results rose considerably in art, business studies, biology, geography, mathematics, psychology, physics and sociology. Again, in almost all subjects, all students obtained grades in the A to E range. The 2004 results are an improvement on those obtained in 2003 and represent satisfactory achievement when standards on entry are taken into account. At AS level, the numbers of candidates choosing to take a final grade in the subject being studied are too small to make meaningful comparisons with national figures. As at A-level, achievement is generally satisfactory.
9. Much good teaching, based on very good subject expertise and a thorough understanding of syllabus and examination requirements, supports students' progress. However, many students do not demonstrate effective study skills or the ability to work independently. These weaknesses impede performance at the higher grade levels. Students' ICT skills are adequate to support research and to enhance the presentation of their work, but these skills are not used enough to support learning across their subjects. Sixth form pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the very good support they receive.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good throughout the school. Attendance is below average in the main school but well above in the sixth form. Punctuality is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good procedures for promoting attendance are helping to reduce the number of authorised absences.
- Although most pupils are keen to learn and make progress, a few misbehave during lessons.
- The school promotes good relationships and racial harmony very well.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in the many opportunities available and are quick to use their initiative.
- The school is particularly successful in promoting pupils’ spiritual and cultural development.
- Attendance in the sixth form is very good because of the very effective strategies now in place to promote attendance.
- Sixth form students display generally good attitudes in lessons.
- Many students have yet to develop the skills required to become independent and critical learners.

Commentary

10. Pupils are proud of their school and they work hard. Working relationships are good and pupils are keen to take part in the many opportunities available. The school serves a wide area and transport difficulties have prevented many pupils from being able to take part in after school extra-curricular activities. In order to tackle this issue and provide pupils with equal opportunities to take part in these activities, governors have provided a ‘sweeper bus’ that leaves school much later than the usual after school buses. This is proving to be very popular; far more pupils are now able to participate in these activities.
11. Pupils are friendly and helpful towards visitors and they usually behave sensibly during break and lunch times. Two-thirds of the pupils who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they knew of racism or bullying within the school. Inspectors discussed these findings with groups of pupils from each year group. In these discussions pupils expressed surprise at the findings and said that the findings did not present an accurate reflection of day-to-day life within their school. Pupils from minority ethnic groups said that they are well looked after and that there are few incidents of racist behaviour and any that do occur are dealt with very quickly and effectively by staff. The school has good procedures in place to manage bullying and teachers constantly encourage pupils to tell them of any such incidents.

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	954	91	0
White – any other White background	58	9	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	4	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	10	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	24	1	0
Black or Black British – African	4	2	0

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

12. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and most pupils know exactly what they should and should not do. Analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire, however, showed that six out of ten pupils were dissatisfied with the overall standard of behaviour. During discussions, pupils were surprised by this and said that there was no particular problem. Inspectors agree and find that most pupils behave well during lessons. Their responsible behaviour and commitment to their studies are reflected in the

rising trend in test and examination results. Prior to the inspection some parents expressed concern about behaviour in some of the lower ability teaching groups. Inspectors observed some disruptive behaviour during the inspection but found that it is not limited to the lower sets. During a small number of the observed lessons, the immature and sometimes truculent behaviour of a few pupils restricted the progress made by the rest of the class. Although this was more likely to occur when the work set was not closely matched to pupils' interests or abilities, it occasionally occurred when these were well matched. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils are in full-time education and the learning support unit provides effective support for pupils who are experiencing difficulties during particular lessons. Nevertheless, the challenging behaviour of some pupils inevitably leads to exclusion from school. The number of fixed term exclusions is about average for a school of this size, while there have been no permanent exclusions for the last two years. All exclusions are well documented and the school involves parents as much as possible in order to prevent such behaviour recurring.

13. Pupils with special educational needs generally demonstrate very positive attitudes to school and appreciate the support they receive. They work well together and are very willing to help each other. When withdrawn for small group teaching, pupils make rapid progress because they work hard and relationships are very good

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.6	School data	0.8
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

14. Attendance has remained fairly static since the time of the last inspection when it was close to the national average. However, there has been a rising national trend over this period and so attendance is now below average. A few chronic absentees explain much of the non-attendance. Because of long-term staff absences the school has been without the support of an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for extended periods and this has made it difficult to follow up unexplained absences as assiduously as the school would have liked. Nevertheless, prosecutions have been brought against the parents of pupils with the poorest attendance records. Because of good procedures and teamwork the school managed to bring about a small improvement in attendance during the last school year. Much of the absence is accounted for by authorised absence, the amount of unauthorised absence being below the national average. Nevertheless, the school continues to work hard to improve attendance and this is a key action point in the school improvement plan. The recent allocation of two EWOs, on a part-time basis, is helping the school to tackle this issue.
15. The development of pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is very good. Spirituality is embedded in the pupils' faith, reflected in the work that they produce and applied within the community of the school. Central to the aims of the school is the all-round development of pupils within a Catholic Christian framework. This is reflected in the school mission statement and put into practice through assemblies, periods of reflection during form time and retreats and seen in the display areas around the school. As a result, pupils are educated in an environment based upon clear values and principles. There is clear recognition by the school that the spiritual development of pupils has a vital impact on their progress, attitudes and achievement. Pupils' positive moral and social development is evident from the way in which the majority display an understanding of and agreement with rules. Pupils are well aware of right and wrong actions and have a very clear knowledge of what is expected of them. This is reflected well in their actions and the concern that most show for others in the school community. Pupils are keen to be involved in a range of activities, and they relate very well to adults and their peers. Pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils develop an understanding

of the traditions and values of other faiths, and an appreciation of cultural diversity is cultivated in several subjects and through the ethos of the school.

Sixth form

16. Most students are well motivated in their lessons, display positive attitudes to school and to their work and are keen to succeed. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is also good although during one lesson a very small number of boys demonstrated that they have yet to learn the self-discipline and self-motivation that are expected of sixth form students. Attendance is very good and students are punctual for school. There are some problems with punctuality at lessons in other schools but these tend to be associated with transport problems or differences in lesson times.
17. For some students the positive attitudes shown in lessons are not carried over outside school. Many have not developed the skills necessary for independent study nor do they realise the importance of additional reading and research, and some do not complete homework or catch up on missed work unless chased by the teacher. They have yet to understand how much work and commitment are required to be independent and mature students who take responsibility for themselves and their own learning. This is having an adverse impact on standards.
18. The school provides a wealth of opportunities for sixth form students to take responsibility; for instance, through involvement with fund-raising, assisting with school administration or taking on a prefect role. Many students rise to these challenges, and events such as the annual fashion show, organised by the sixth form committee, raise considerable amounts for charity. Nevertheless, significant numbers of students continue to resist these attempts to encourage them to make a positive contribution to school life.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. There is much lively and interesting teaching from knowledgeable teachers, who make good use of assessment that promotes good learning. Pupils' learning experiences are enriched by very good provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and a good range of enrichment activities. Links with parents, other schools and the community are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Assessment procedures are used effectively to guide pupils' progress and raise standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because teaching is good pupils are achieving well and standards are rising.
- Good relationships and teachers' very good subject knowledge support pupils' learning well.
- Assessment procedures are good and are being used effectively to show pupils and students how to improve their work.
- There is not enough emphasis in many subjects, both in the main school and in the sixth form, to encourage pupils and students to be independent learners.
- In a small number of lessons pupils do not maintain interest because learning activities are not demanding enough. This particularly affects lessons in art in Years 10 and 11.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning in some subjects.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 135 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	32 (24%)	73 (54%)	23 (17%)	7 (5%)	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.

19. Much professional development time has been devoted to improving the quality of teaching and learning. The sharing of ideas of how to improve is rapidly becoming part of the culture of the school. This, allied to more consistent monitoring by senior and middle managers, has led to an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching in Years 7 to 11, judged to be satisfactory at the last inspection, is now good. At the time of the last inspection the quality of teaching was very good or better in about one in five lessons; it is now very good or better in about one in four lessons. There is also slightly less unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. This is consistent with the judgement in the last inspection report.
20. A particular strength of teaching is the way in which teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan their lessons and build new ideas that provide an appropriate level of challenge. The structures of the National Key Stage 3 strategy are put to good use by many and are having a beneficial effect on the pupils' learning. In the best lessons, learning objectives are made clear at the outset so that pupils can see where they are heading. The learning objectives are then reviewed at the end of the lesson as a means of helping pupils to evaluate the learning that has taken place. The positive impact of the national strategy is also seen in the rising standards in Years 10 and 11. However, a general weakness in teaching in these year groups is that in many subjects pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to engage in independent learning and are too dependent on their teachers. This is inhibiting their development as mature learners who are capable of taking responsibility for their own learning. Resources are generally used well. To tackle a weakness identified at the time of the last inspection, much attention has been devoted to the development of teachers' skills in the use of ICT. This has had beneficial effects and there is evidence of the increased use of ICT to support teaching and learning in several subjects. However, difficulties in access to computers is restricting the use of ICT in some subjects and this is having an adverse impact on progress, most notably in modern foreign languages, art, music and design and technology.
21. Most pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers. In most lessons teachers exercise a firm but friendly control that leads to a productive working atmosphere in which learning can thrive. By contrast, teaching in a small number of lessons suffers because teachers do not exert enough control, have unclear aims or do not engage the pupils sufficiently. Pupils lose concentration and waste time in these lessons, and teachers have to spend too much of their time demanding pupils' attention. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection was in art where in many lessons little progress was made because learning objectives were not clear and learning activities were not challenging enough.
22. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Effective use is made of teaching assistants who have a good knowledge of the needs of their pupils and use this knowledge well to provide them with effective support. The resources used to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs are particularly well designed to take account of pupils' individual needs. This makes a significant contribution to the good progress these pupils are making. When pupils are withdrawn for teaching in small groups, teaching is good and often very good. The very few pupils with English as an additional language are fluent English language speakers and do not need any additional support.
23. There has been considerable improvement in assessment procedures and the use of assessment information since the last inspection. The school now makes systematic use of a wide range of information from a variety of sources to analyse potential and set targets for improvement. Teachers

now make more effective use of the information gained from assessments to guide the planning of pupils' learning. This is particularly seen in the very good provision that is now made for gifted and talented pupils and in the good quality of the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs. The account that teachers take of the academic and personal targets contained in the plans help pupils with special needs to make good progress in their learning. Because of rigorous monitoring there has also been an improvement in the marking of pupils' work. In most subjects this is now thorough and informative. In English, modern foreign languages and science, for example, the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work are noted and targets for improvement are set. However, in a few subjects, marking does not give pupils clear enough guidance on how they can improve and ensuring consistency in marking remains a priority in school improvement planning.

Sixth form

24. Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form with no teaching less than satisfactory. Examples of very good teaching were seen in business studies, mathematics, music and geography. Very good relationships between teachers and students promote good learning and teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively to enthuse and engage their students. Lively, open discussions are features of the best lessons and are used regularly in sociology and English to encourage students to form their own opinions and to learn from each other. Higher attaining students are well challenged in history, and there is a very good range of teaching methods in business studies.
25. However, even though the teaching observed was predominantly good, there are some underlying problems linked with students' lack of independence and their lack of understanding of the intellectual effort needed to gain success at the highest levels. For example, although teaching seen in each mathematics lesson during the inspection was very good, the range of learning opportunities overall is relatively narrow. In art, students are too dependent on their teachers and students initiate too little of the work themselves. In chemistry, some students do not extend their classroom learning with additional reading and research. The large numbers choosing to take sociology has led to the withdrawal of the coursework option, reducing opportunities for independent study in this subject. Elements of this lack of independence were seen in other subjects and emphasised through discussions with theatre studies students. They see clearly that the subject makes different demands on them and enjoy these challenges. They are required to be responsible for their own work, to collaborate in creating and developing their ideas and to solve problems. They have considerable impact on the direction of the lesson and are constantly challenged to identify how their work can be improved. These characteristics are as yet not seen enough in other subjects.
26. Assessment presents an improving picture. Marking is generally helpful and the new procedures in place for tracking and monitoring students' progress are making a real difference to the rapidity in responding to underachievement. Self-evaluation is an integral element in history and theatre studies. However, there is still some variation in students' knowledge and understanding of their current standards and predicted grades, and how they can improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good in both the main school and the sixth form. Enrichment through extra-curricular activities is good. Staffing, accommodation and resources provide satisfactory support for learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of subjects provides well for the aspirations of pupils and their parents.
- The school has firm plans to extend the range of vocational courses, which is currently limited.
- Provision for pupils' personal development, through the PSHE and citizenship programme, is very good.
- Very good provision is made for gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs.
- The arrangement for grouping pupils in Years 7 to 9 makes it difficult for pupils to move between sets.
- Enrichment through extra-curricular activities is good.
- Sixth form students have access to a wide range of subjects through the South-West Coventry Federation.

Commentary

27. The curriculum is responsive to the preferences of pupils and their parents. In Years 7 to 9, all National Curriculum subjects are taught and more than half of pupils in Years 8 and 9 study two modern foreign languages. This represents good provision. In Years 10 and 11, option blocks provide a good choice of subjects, although the range of vocational choices is narrow. At present only one GNVQ is offered, in ICT. In Year 11, a small number of pupils follow an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course. However, the school has analysed the needs of its less well motivated pupils and has adopted an innovative approach to its ASDAN provision for Year 10. This approach links in well with the new requirements for work related learning (WRL). There is a firm intention to extend vocational provision in the near future. This reflects the good arrangements that are in place for reviewing and evaluating the curriculum, and the enthusiasm to embrace initiatives such as the National Strategy for Key Stage 3. This has improved learning in many subjects and is contributing to a rise in standards. Similarly, the school has rectified weaknesses identified in the last inspection. These weaknesses were in ICT, in arrangements to ensure curriculum continuity with the contributing primary schools and in the length of the taught week. The school makes very good use of external advisers to review the work of subject departments.
28. The curriculum is designed to provide all pupils with equal opportunities. For example, setting arrangements are monitored to ensure that pupils of particular backgrounds are not over-represented in lower sets. However, the timetable arrangement in Years 7 to 9 is based on two bands, one of higher attaining and one of lower attaining pupils. This presents difficulties for the movement of pupils between sets in individual subjects. Very good provision is made for gifted and talented pupils. This represents a positive response to the previous inspection report. Initiatives such as the Key Stage 3 Challenge Club and the Mathematics Challenge have helped to raise the numbers of pupils reaching higher National Curriculum levels by the end of Year 9. Gifted pupils in Year 11 are taken by taxi to the City College to follow an AS course in critical thinking. Enrichment for these pupils is very good.
29. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. A number of pupils are withdrawn from lessons in order to concentrate on extra reading and writing. This is arranged so as to ensure that disruption to lessons is minimal. Pupils at all stages on the school's list of pupils who have special educational needs are well provided for and the school's procedures comply with the Code of Practice. The co-ordinator and other staff use their knowledge of pupils' achievements in order to plan future targets and the individual education plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that targets reflect the progress made.
30. Arrangements for careers advice and work experience are good. Careers guidance is an integral and well-established part of PSHE and citizenship provision. Work experience is provided for all pupils in Year 10. Pupils learn to write curricular vitae and letters of application, and receive training for interviews. There is a strong platform for developing WRL. Together with the good advice they receive on courses available in Years 10 and 12, this represents a good level of preparation for later stages of education or employment.
31. Enrichment through extra-curricular activities supports learning well. In addition to retreats, residential visits and field trips, the school provides dedicated special days such as an enrichment day, during the most recent of which 25 workshops were provided for pupils to sample additional activities. The school has analysed the uptake for after school clubs and sports, with the result that it now provides a late bus service to ensure that pupils of all backgrounds are able to take advantage of the extra-curricular activities offered. Booster classes for pupils preparing for the GCSE examination are offered in most subjects and there are good opportunities in sport and in music. There is an annual dramatic production, a carol service, a music concert and regular visits to the theatre. However, opportunities in art are very limited.

32. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is generally satisfactory. In common with many other schools, the school experiences difficulties in recruiting teachers in some subjects. It has not yet been possible to appoint a head of science and the science department is without a specialist teacher of physics. Teaching and learning are well supported by good librarian, technician and other support staff. Special needs support staff are effectively deployed and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Administrative, caretaking and cleaning staff make important contributions to the day-to-day functioning of the school. Accommodation is satisfactory for teaching the curriculum. At the time of the inspection a new extension was nearing completion. The new building extension will provide much needed office space. Accommodation for learning support will also be improved and it will be possible to group subject teaching rooms more closely. There are many spacious rooms, but also some that are too small for large classes. Some of the science laboratories are too small and in need of refurbishment and there are not enough music practice rooms. The school is beginning to use its large grounds to extend the curriculum, for example by establishing a vegetable garden as part of the ASDAN course, and for creating benches, bird boxes and wind chimes within design and technology. Although resources are generally satisfactory and in most subjects adequate for the teaching of the curriculum, they are inadequate in art. Resources will be considerably enhanced by the provision of two new computer suites when the new extension is occupied. These suites will not only improve ICT resources but also allow subjects easier access to computers. The library is of good size and provides good resources and facilities for private study.

Sixth form

33. The growing number of students in the sixth form is enabling the school to offer an increasing range of AS-level and A-level subjects. This year the school has been able to offer courses in law and psychology for the first time. This range is further enhanced by the school's collaboration with several other schools and colleges, which allows access to an even wider variety of subjects such as media, electronics and photography. The opportunity to take physics at a local school is also offering a solution to the temporary problem in recruiting a teacher for A-level physics. This range of courses meets the needs of the vast majority of students, most of whom are able to continue their studies in higher education. Key skills courses in communication, the application of number and ICT are available for students who have not achieved adequate standards in these areas when they enter the sixth form. The very few students with special educational needs are provided for very well.
34. Some students are unwilling to travel to other schools for lessons, preferring the security of a familiar environment. However, those who do so recognise the benefits of meeting a wider range of students, improving their social and communication skills and becoming more open and adaptable to new experiences. Numbers taking up this opportunity are increasing. Only 12 Year 13 students study at other schools while the number has risen to 33 in Year 12. Until this year the range of options for students who may be better suited to vocational courses has been limited. BTEC Level 2 vocational courses have now been introduced across the federation with the school offering a Level 2 course in caring. The number enrolling for this course has been disappointing and, in addition, only one student travels to another federation school to study a vocational engineering course. However, the schools are looking at ways of improving the information given to Year 11 pupils before they make their choices for next year.
35. Staffing levels are satisfactory although the rapidly increasing numbers in the sixth form have put pressure on group sizes in some popular subjects. As a consequence, some students have to take psychology or business studies at another school. On the other hand, the sixth form is more cost-effective because fewer groups are running with very small numbers. Accommodation for sixth form teaching is sometimes inadequate for large teaching groups, but the recent building work will eventually lead to more dedicated sixth form teaching rooms of a suitable size. Resources are generally satisfactory but there are some significant shortcomings. The shortages in resources in chemistry and art have a severe impact on the quality and range of practical work and in sociology they restrict the opportunities for independent study.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. The school provides good support, advice and guidance and involves pupils well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are well known to staff and the school provides an above average standard of care.
- Pupils' academic progress is closely monitored and this helps pupils to achieve well.
- Well-planned induction procedures help incoming pupils to settle down quickly.
- The school encourages pupils to express their views and acts upon them whenever it can.
- The recently established tracking and monitoring system is enabling potential underachievement in the sixth form to be identified more rapidly.
- There is good information and advice on sixth form subject choice, careers and opportunities in higher education.

Commentary

36. Members of staff work closely together in order to ensure that pupils are well looked after during the school day. Working relationships are good and rigorous monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development helps to ensure that they make good progress from the moment they arrive in Year 7. The school uses exclusion as a very last resort and its commitment to the education of all its pupils is reflected by the fact that there have been no permanent exclusions over the last two years. Good links with a wide range of social and health agencies enable the school to provide individual pupils with effective support as and when it is needed. For example, pupils may receive advice on anger management or be referred to one of the several pupil support groups in the school. The learning support centre also provides programmes for pupils at risk of exclusion as well as those who may be returning from a period of absence. This good level of support helps the pupils concerned to cope with their difficulties and to work as constructively as they can. Child protection and health and safety procedures are good and members of staff are fully aware of their responsibilities.
37. Most marking provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work. There has been a significant improvement in the availability and use of assessment information. This information is now being used more effectively for target setting and for monitoring and reviewing pupils' progress. Teachers also ensure that pupils know the examination criteria and have a clear idea of what is required to obtain the best possible grades. Tutorial periods and the PSHE programme effectively reinforce pupils' personal development.
38. Liaison with contributing primary schools is close and pupils in Year 7 speak warmly of the support they receive at the time of transfer. A 'transfer day' is held in the summer term for Year 6 pupils who will be entering the school in the following September. During the day, pupils from Year 10 assist the Year 6 pupils and then remain linked with them when they arrive at the start of the autumn term. These older pupils are then in a position to offer support and advice should any particular concerns arise. Video-conferencing between Years 6 and 7 enables prospective pupils to speak to those who have recently moved to the school. Pupils who have recently joined Year 7 say that the support they received helped them to settle quickly into their new school.
39. Analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire shows just over one quarter of pupils feel the school is not interested in their views; inspectors do not agree. For example, the views of pupils in Years 7 to 9 were recently sought through a detailed questionnaire and pupils of all ages are able to express their opinions through the year and school councils. The councils meet every other week and have produced numerous ideas and suggestions for improvement. The school has acted upon several of these, including the provision of additional seating in the school grounds and the installation of basketball nets in the playground.

Sixth form

40. In the last academic year, new procedures were put in place for advising and guiding students' subject choices and the transition into the sixth form. These included a 'taster day' when pupils in Year 11 were able to sample a range of sixth form subjects and gain an insight into the nature of sixth form work. Most Year 12 students feel that they were on the whole served well by these arrangements. They welcome the opportunity to modify their course choices early in Year 12 and value the continuing support and guidance they receive from their tutors.
41. The head of sixth form and the member of the senior management team with responsibility for the sixth form have together set up very good procedures for tracking and evaluating the progress of students against targets based on their GCSE results. Although further refinements are necessary, students and their parents recognise that these procedures are providing good support. Potential underachievement is identified at an early stage so that additional support can be provided. Vulnerable students and those finding difficulties in adjusting to the more rigorous demands of sixth form study are provided with very good support through the individualised learning report system. Short-term, manageable targets are set. These are monitored in every lesson and progress is reviewed each day with the head of sixth form.
42. The head of sixth form, recognising the difficulties that some students face when joining groups in other schools, is currently formalising induction procedures for students coming into the school to join new groups of unfamiliar students and teachers. Students are offered good advice on higher education courses and help with the preparation of their UCAS applications. Connexions advisors visit the school regularly for those students who intend to take up employment after the sixth form although most students go on to higher education.
43. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a significant minority of students indicated that they felt that the school does not seek or act on their views. However, in discussions during the inspection it was clear that the sixth form committee, a very lively group, has already helped to improve the facilities available for sixth form students. These include the provision of more areas for private study and blinds to improve the environment in some teaching rooms. The committee is also playing an active part in the development of the sixth form into a coherent group that contributes positively to the wider school community. In addition, the head of sixth form takes very seriously the evaluations that students are asked to complete after the Year

11 'taster day' and the Year 12 induction course. Comments are analysed and used to identify areas for improvement. The views of sixth form students are listened to and acted on with much thought.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are good in the main school and in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are well informed about day-to-day school life and their children's progress.
- Active participation in Coventry's South-West Federation enriches the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.
- Good links with the community promote pupils' personal development well.

Commentary

44. As part of the inspection process, parents were asked to complete a questionnaire that sought their views on numerous areas of school life. Although fewer than ten per cent of the questionnaires were returned, analysis of parents' responses shows that they are pleased with most areas of the school's work. A few parents, however, expressed concern about the quality of information provided about their children's progress. Inspectors disagree; annual reports provide detailed feedback about how they

are progressing in their studies and whether or not they are meeting their teachers' expectations. In addition, parents receive at least one very informative interim report each year. Senior members of staff are always willing to meet individual parents at a time of mutual convenience.

45. The school enjoys very close links with its main contributing primary as well as with other secondary schools. There are exchanges of teachers and joint projects to ensure continuity when pupils transfer between schools. The school is an active member of the Coventry South-West Federation and it enjoys very constructive links with four other secondary schools and the further education college. This liaison enables the school to provide an alternative curriculum for a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Some of the students in Year 11 help with after school activities in primary schools.
46. The school serves a wide area within Coventry and links with the various parishes help to foster pupils' strong sense of identity. Priests are closely involved with the liturgical life of the school and are always present during Holy Days, Advent and Lent. Representatives from the police force, prison and fire services contribute to the PSHE and citizenship programmes and representatives from local businesses provide mock interviews and advise on possible careers.

Sixth form

47. Partnerships with parents are good. Parents are provided with three reports during each year and a teacher-parent consultation evening early in Year 12. Reports contain clear information on students' progress in relation to their predicted examination grades.
48. Some aspects of the curricular links with other schools in the federation, such as travel and the difficulties presented by the different timings of the school day, need further consideration but cordial relationships, good management arrangements and the appointment of a part-time co-ordinator are making steady improvements to the provision.
49. Links with higher education establishments are good with regular visits to open days, visits to the school by admissions tutors and lecturers and the opportunity to attend an Oxbridge information day at a local grammar school. Links with the community are good with students participating in a range of fund-raising events. They undertake work experience and work shadowing and, as part of the junior sports leader award scheme, some students lead activities in primary schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are very good, overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and that of other key staff is good. The management of the school is very good. The school makes good use of evaluation information to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses. Governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has guided the school successfully through a period of transition and standards are rising.
- Rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of departments are helping to raise standards.
- Leadership and management in art are unsatisfactory.
- Governors provide the school with strong support.
- Very good leadership and management of the sixth form is driving up standards and improving the quality of education for sixth form students.

Commentary

50. The headteacher was presented with a number of significant challenges when she took up post three years ago. Foremost amongst these was the need to raise standards. The headteacher is providing the very strong leadership needed to do this and standards are rising. She has brought to the school clarity of purpose, high expectations and a well-conceived strategy for improvement. This is communicated

clearly to all who are associated with the school so that there is no doubt about the determination to raise standards further. The headteacher has high expectations of the staff and sets a very good example in her commitment to the pupils and the school. Staff, pupils and parents recognise the impact the headteacher has had on the school and welcome the clear direction the school is being given.

51. The leadership provided by other senior managers is good. The senior management team has recently been restructured and every member of the team brings considerable expertise to his or her areas of responsibility. During the period in which the senior management team has been in transition, members of the team have been primarily concerned with carrying out their line management responsibilities. They carry out their duties effectively and provide good leadership and support to the middle managers and staff for whom they are responsible. However, during the period of transition, they have been less involved as a team, in strategic thinking about the future of the school as a whole. This has been mainly driven by the headteacher. In order to consolidate the progress the school has made over recent years and to take the school forward with equal vitality there is now a need to ensure that members of the senior management team share a common vision for the future of the school so that they are in a position to communicate a clear sense of purpose to staff, pupils and parents.
52. One of the features of school leadership is the wide range of staff who are involved in school development activities. For example, all staff are involved in school improvement planning and this helps to ensure that there is a close link between individual, departmental and school improvement priorities. Further examples of the benefits of involving all staff in development activities are seen in the work of the teaching and learning group, who are making a significant contribution to the improving quality of teaching, and the effective implementation of the National Key Stage 3 strategy. The vast majority of teachers, and particularly those relatively new to the profession, have welcomed the opportunity to contribute to school improvement in this way.
53. The management of the school is very good. Performance management is fully implemented and contributing to improvement. Virtually all of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully. Strategic planning has been improved and is now good. Rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have been introduced and these have been effective in bringing about improvement. The consistent implementation of procedures for target setting and tracking pupils' progress enables teachers to provide focused support and guidance to individuals. This is making a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. Middle management has also been strengthened. Temporary management in science is good and very good management in English and mathematics is having a positive impact on standards. Management in almost all other subjects is good or very good. However, although there are signs of improvement, leadership and management in art are unsatisfactory. There is a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in the subject and this is having an adverse effect on achievement in Years 10 and 11. Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator leads a well-trained and effectively deployed team of teaching assistants very well.
54. Governors are well informed and fully committed to the school. They provide both support and challenge, and ensure that pupils of all backgrounds are fully included in the school. Apart from minor breaches in statutory requirements regarding the use of ICT in design and technology, and modern foreign languages, and the reporting of standards in citizenship at the end of Year 9, all statutory responsibilities are fulfilled. The governing body is in the process of being reorganised. All governors are being given responsibility for the oversight of a particular area of the school's work. This is to ensure that governors work with increased efficiency. The chairs of the committees are experienced and know the school well. Governors are closely involved in the school improvement planning and are aware of the school's strengths and where improvement is needed. Governors monitor the budget with care and as a result principles of best value are applied to all spending and financial management is very good. Expenditure is targeted according to priorities in the school improvement plan and value for money is good.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,991,020
Total expenditure	3,874,202
Expenditure per pupil	3,157

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	150,533
Balance carried forward to the next	116,819

Sixth form

55. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head of sixth form has a very clear vision of how she wants to improve the sixth form based on her extensive experience in further education. The head of sixth form, very well supported by her line manager, has transformed the procedures for tracking and monitoring students' academic and personal development through the sixth form. Data is now being used with increasing effect to set targets, monitor and evaluate progress and identify action to be taken to address weaknesses. Clear systems are now in place for supporting vulnerable students and those who have still to understand the requirements for successful A-level study. She is developing a 'responsibility portfolio' for students, which expects them to contribute to school life through prefect duties, community work, fund-raising, administrative support or looking after the school environment. She recognises, however, that to change the culture of the sixth form in this way will require perseverance and commitment and these she possesses in abundance.
56. Having set up procedures for supporting students and monitoring their progress. The head of the sixth form is now turning her attention to the quality of teaching and learning. She has already run one session to look at how sixth form teaching can promote and improve independent learning. The effectiveness of her management is demonstrated in the increased numbers staying on, improving standards, the widening of curriculum choice and very good attendance.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

What is the effectiveness of work related learning?

57. All pupils have an effective two-week work experience in Year 10. In discussion, Year 11 pupils recalled their enjoyment at taking part in a well-planned activity that used the context of work to help them to increase their knowledge and understanding of the work place. Good preparation before the placement and systematic debriefing enabled pupils to share and learn from different experiences. A small minority felt their experience was negative. This issue was also raised at the parents meeting. Work experience and careers education are well planned by the school and make good use of the specialist business and industrial knowledge of their Connexions partner.
58. A small number of pupils take the ASDAN and Initial Award courses at entry level in Years 10 and 11 as a part of an alternative curriculum. In 2004, the first year the award was examined, the results were well below the national average; half of pupils obtained bronze awards and one in ten silver awards. One lesson was observed. Pupils in Year 11 were seen working on their work-experience diaries and a unit on home management satisfactorily. With extra help from the teacher and learning assistant, pupils achieved satisfactorily. As a result, pupils enjoyed the lesson and were appropriately challenged. Arrangements for the teaching of the course in Year 10 have been modified and improved.
59. Starting from September 2004 a new work related learning (WRL) course is being piloted. This is timetabled for an identified group of Year 10 pupils who will benefit from an alternative curriculum. Four senior staff teach the course and learning is very good. An innovative programme includes communication, relationships, basic skills, problem solving, video-conferencing, research, presentation skills and teamwork. Pupils are thriving on this diet of learning. Attendance and behaviour problems have been monitored and are improving. Pupils are enjoying school and are keen to aim for their short-

term targets and take a step-by-step approach to success. In the summer of 2005 the school aims to disseminate the findings from the pilot to all staff so that WRL can be embedded as a cross-curricular theme in all subjects. Pupils are provided with good WRL experiences in several subjects but these have not been mapped, because there is not an appointed co-ordinator for WRL.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average.
- Good teaching leads to good achievement at the end of Year 11.
- Very good use is made of assessment information to track pupils' progress and set targets.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is a wider gap between the attainment of girls and boys than that observed nationally.

Commentary

60. In 2003, results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average, as they had been for the previous three years. They were also above the average for schools with similar attainment at the end of Year 6 and well above average in comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances. The margin by which girls' attainment is higher than that of boys is greater than the national difference and has not narrowed over a number of years. The provisional results for 2004 show that there has been a dip in attainment. The percentage of pupils at the expected Level 5 remains above the 2003 national average but the percentage obtaining higher levels has fallen. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are above national expectations. Standards at the start of Year 7 are just below average and pupils achieve well to reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well.
61. In the 2003 English Language GCSE examination the percentage of pupils attaining grades A* to C was close to the national average, with the percentage of A* and A grades slightly above average. There was a similar picture for English literature. Provisional results in English language for 2004 show a slight increase in grades A* to C to be in line with the national average for 2003. Standards in English literature, taken by a large majority of pupils, rose significantly in 2004, with the percentage of A* to C grades well above the national average for 2003. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Years 10 and 11 are presently in line with what is seen nationally.
62. Pupils of all backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. The achievement of pupils who took their examinations in 2003 was satisfactory, while the achievement of the 2004 cohort, especially those who also took English literature, was good. Pupils presently in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress, with a particular area of strength being the quality of their response to literature.
63. The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Some very good teaching was seen. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, the determinedly poor behaviour of a significant minority of pupils had a very negative impact on the learning of the whole class. Teachers plan their lessons well, with clear learning objectives. These are explained to the pupils who then have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Teachers offer a high level of challenge across the attainment range. This motivates pupils to work hard and aim high. Teaching to meet test and examination requirements is a clear strength. Pupils are left in no doubt about what they must do in order to obtain the best possible results. Teachers make good use of questioning, group work and discussion to encourage pupils to think hard and share their ideas. This contributes to the good progress pupils make. The quality of marking is consistently good. It offers pupils clear targets and specific advice on how to meet them, so that pupils are very aware of their own progress. Sometimes teachers do not leave enough time at the

end of lessons to discuss what progress has been made towards the learning objectives. When this occurs, pupils do not have a clear idea of how far they have moved forward.

64. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The department works very well together as a team and there is strong commitment to raising standards. The reason for the recent dip in Year 9 attainment and for the disparity of attainment between boys and girls have been effectively analysed and a good range of procedures put in place to rectify this. Action has also been taken to raise boys' attainment, but this has not, as yet, been successful. Very good use is made of assessment information to set pupils' targets and identify potential underachievement. Effective support is given to pupils who are in danger of not meeting their targets. Very good monitoring and evaluation procedures ensure that there is consistency of practice across the whole department. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There is greater consistency in the quality of teaching with a very small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching. Much better use is now made of assessment information. The department is monitored well. Good improvement has been made in the use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

65. Standards of literacy in other subjects of the curriculum are satisfactory. Overall there are enough opportunities provided for pupils to speak and listen to others. In most subjects pupils are able to explain their ideas clearly, although not always in great detail. Pupils usually use subject-specific vocabulary correctly. In design and technology pupils make good use of opportunities to evaluate each other's work in pairs and to give class presentations. Opportunities to write for a range of audiences and purposes vary from subject to subject; for example, in geography pupils carry out a range of writing tasks competently and in science report writing is good, while in mathematics pupils have limited opportunities to write and there is no additional support for those whose writing skills are not adequate. In many subjects pupils' spelling is inaccurate. Pupils' skills in reading are generally at least sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in French were below average in 2003 but improved significantly in 2004. German results were above average in 2003 and improved further in 2004.
- Good teaching stimulates positive attitudes, so that pupils achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11.
- A committed team of teachers is very well led and managed.
- Some requirements of the programmes of study are not met.
- The range of extra-curricular opportunities is limited.

Commentary

66. Teachers' assessments in 2003 show standards to be above expectations by the end of Year 9. GCSE results in French were below average in 2003, reflecting discontinuity in teaching. In 2004 there was substantial improvement, largely due to better results from girls. In German, results were above average in 2003, and improved in 2004. Girls did much better than boys, by greater than the margin nationally. Numbers gaining the highest grades, A* and A, were below average. Because nearly all pupils continue to study a modern language in Years 10 and 11, the improvement in results is especially commendable.
67. Inspection evidence confirms that standards in French are above expectations by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement. The large number of pupils studying German as a second language from Year 8 reach standards that are slightly below expectations for their age by the end of Year 9. However, since they have only one lesson per week, this again represents good achievement. Pupils in all teaching groups show good ability to learn and recall vocabulary and basic structures, so that

comprehension skills are well developed. Writing skills develop slowly at first, but improve rapidly in Year 9 due to the structured support provided. Higher and average attaining pupils write fairly accurate descriptions and accounts. Lower attainers, including pupils with special educational needs, write more briefly and less accurately, but convey meaning at a basic level. Oral skills are comparatively weak. There is little evidence of pupils being able to seek and give information from memory, and pronunciation is sometimes a barrier to communication. In lessons, there was no strong evidence of different performance levels by boys and girls, and minority ethnic pupils contributed as well as their classmates.

68. By the end of Year 11, pupils continue to achieve well, and standards are above average in both languages, apart from speaking. The structure of written coursework means that all pupils manage to write about holidays, hobbies and healthy eating at a level reflecting improvement on prior attainment. Lower attaining pupils continue to make commendable efforts in class and sustain satisfactory standards in comprehension tasks. Oral standards continue to be average at best. Most pupils find it difficult to sustain a conversation and pronounce poorly. Some higher attaining pupils can discuss past events, although not fluently.
69. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and never unsatisfactory. Planning for lessons is good, with a range of tasks to engage pupils, delivered briskly. Consequently, teachers manage behaviour through the work, and pupils develop positive attitudes because they enjoy many of the activities. Teachers apply the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 effectively to structure learning. The weakness in teaching is that teachers do not apply their very good mastery of the foreign languages well enough to have the desired impact on learning. Their overuse of English contributes to the weakness in oral standards. Similarly, the range of resources seen during the inspection was quite narrow. Whilst very good use is made of overhead projectors and interactive whiteboards to provide visual support for learning, teachers did not use computers, readers and cassette players to broaden learning experiences. Marking is very helpful, and symptomatic of the caring approach to individual needs which was apparent in lessons. Homework usually complements or extends classwork, although opportunities for more challenging tasks promoting independent effort are sometimes missed.
70. The work of the department is very well led and managed. Minutes of meetings show a very good degree of shared commitment and good use of time to develop teaching and learning styles. The head of department monitors work through regular lesson observations and book sampling. Analysis of results is very thorough and leads to amendments to the work provided. Documentation supports teaching and learning very effectively, and development planning is thoughtful. Schemes of work provide good guidance, and include provision for citizenship and work-related learning. However, there are omissions in meeting the requirements of the programmes of study, in the use of ICT, the provision of opportunities for independent reading, and opportunities to communicate with native speakers. At present, the range of extra-curricular opportunities is limited, although there are plans to remedy this and provide better enrichment. Collectively these areas for improvement prevent standards from being even higher. However, improving standards, positive attitudes and good teaching indicate good improvement since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are improving.
- Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Summaries are not used effectively to assess pupils' progress in some lessons.

Commentary

71. The end of Year 9 National Curriculum test results in 2003 were average when compared with all schools but below average when compared to schools in which pupils attained similar standards at the end of Year 6. In comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances the results were well above average. The 2004 results continued the rising trend seen in the last four years and represent good achievement when standards on entry are taken into account.
72. The 2003 GCSE examination results were slightly above the national average and average when compared with schools in which pupils achieved similar standards at the end of Year 9. The performance by girls exceeded that of boys. However, the 2004 results fell slightly below those obtained in 2003. This was because of a drop in the performance of boys. Nevertheless, the results met the school's target and this represented satisfactory achievement for the year group.
73. Inspection evidence shows standards in Year 9 are improving and are above national expectations. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved because of the effective implementation of the National Strategy for mathematics. As a result the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Levels 7 and 8 has risen significantly in recent years. Standards in Year 11 are in line with expectations. The rate of improvement being made by pupils in Year 10 is more rapid than in Year 11 because of the adoption of the modular GCSE course. More pupils are achieving higher grades in the GCSE examination because they are offered greater challenge in lessons and their progress is being monitored more closely. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with very good support and achievement is similar to that of their peers.
74. The quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved since the last inspection. Much very good teaching and learning occurs in Years 7 to 9. The best teaching is characterised by high expectations and the productive use of lesson time. Teachers have good subject knowledge and good knowledge of test and examination requirements. Because of this pupils know what they have to do in order to obtain the best possible grades. Lesson planning is very good and clear learning objectives ensure that pupils are engaged in lessons. The majority of lessons start with an introductory activity that consolidates and extends pupils' understanding of basic mathematical concepts. However, because reviews are not carried out at the end of some lessons, teachers are not always able to confirm the progress made in the lesson. Classroom management is generally good, but in a few lessons the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of pupils has an adverse effect on learning. The marking of pupils' work is consistent and offers pupils sound advice on how to improve. Pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 is regularly monitored through assessments linked to National Curriculum levels. In Years 10 and 11 monitoring is based on predicted GCSE grades. These procedures are effectively supporting the rise in standards.

75. Leadership and management of mathematics are very good. The department makes detailed analyses of pupils' progress and this information is used effectively to organise pupil groupings, to set targets and monitor progress. The head of department provides very good support and leads a team of conscientious teachers. The department has embraced the ideas outlined in the National Strategy for mathematics. Pupils have limited access to ICT and this is having an adverse impact on learning. The introduction of a modular GCSE course in Year 10 is acting as an additional motivator to learning and in particular for boys. The department makes good provision for gifted and talented pupils. This includes entry to the UK maths challenge and the weekly mathematics workshop offers pupils opportunities to consolidate and extend their learning. The subject has made very good progress since the last inspection and is well aware of what it needs to do to improve further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. Standards of numeracy are average. The work done in mathematics gives pupils confidence to apply their knowledge in other subjects. Pupils have a sound command of number facts and are able to tackle numerical calculations in different situations. There is, for example, very good practice in English, where bar charts are used most effectively to track the rise and fall in tension in *Romeo and Juliet*. In design and technology pupils work to scale, measure and weigh accurately. They use coordinates correctly and have good graphing techniques in geography and ICT.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good with some very good features.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Assessment is used well to follow the progress and achievement of pupils.
- In some lessons there is insufficient opportunity for independent learning.

Commentary

77. In 2003, National Curriculum test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were average. Boys' and girls' results were similar. When compared with similar schools, results were above average at Level 5 but average at Level 6. Teachers accurately assessed the attainment of pupils in Year 9. Science results were not as good as those for English and mathematics. Achievement relative to attainment on entry to the school was as expected. Results have improved from being below average at the time of the last inspection to average in 2003, and have improved further in 2004.
78. Work seen during the inspection shows that, by the end of Year 9, standards are consistent with national expectations for both boys and girls. Higher attaining pupils are able to represent chemical reactions by balanced chemical equations and have a good understanding of the pyramid of numbers when considering how different species populate a given area. Lower attaining pupils are less secure in their knowledge and understanding of science. They are unable to write equations, but understand that in chemical reactions atoms are rearranged. Pupils, on the whole, make satisfactory gains in their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts in Years 7 to 9.
79. GCSE examination results, in 2003, were average, but were not as good as those for English and mathematics. Boys' results, which were above average, were better than those of girls. When compared with similar schools, results were well above average. Achievement relative

to attainment at the end of Year 9 was better than expected. There was a significant improvement in examination results in 2004 indicating that these pupils achieved very well in comparison with their results at the end of Year 9.

80. Pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 are making good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in science. Standards, overall, are above average for both boys and girls. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 have a very good understanding of the factors that affect the rate of chemical reactions and of static electricity. Lower attaining students, however, whilst often still achieving average standards, are less secure in their knowledge and understanding. Overall, students throughout the school make good progress. Standards of literacy and numeracy are at least satisfactory and often good.
81. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and often good, whilst in Years 10 and 11, they are good and often very good. The principal features of teaching are the effective use of good subject knowledge by teachers and high expectations that are communicated well to pupils. Well-focused planning and an appropriate range of methods stimulate pupils' interest and actively engage them in lessons. In a few lessons, however, pupils do not have enough opportunity to work independently. Homework is set which extends or consolidates classwork.
82. Assessment is used very effectively to monitor the progress of pupils, to identify underachievers, adjust teaching and guide curriculum planning. The marking of pupils' work is thorough and comments offer encouragement and guidance on how to improve. The identification of appropriate learning objectives coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress. Pupils clearly enjoy their work in lessons. Because they are fully engaged, they work hard and lessons proceed at a good pace.
83. Leadership and management in the science department are good. The acting head of science provides a clear and well-focused direction for the subject. This is reflected in the department development plan, which provides a well-considered guide for improvement. Teachers work well together, and are given excellent support by the team of teaching assistants. However, technician support is inadequate. Even though none of the teachers are specialists in physics, their knowledge of physics is satisfactory because they have received good in-service training. Resources, in terms of books and equipment, are satisfactory. Although there are sufficient laboratories, teaching and learning are adversely affected because several are too small for larger groups and are in urgent need of refurbishment. This has a negative impact upon teaching and learning since the effectiveness of teaching is adversely affected. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement is also good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good as a result of good planning and the strong subject knowledge of teachers.
- Standards are rising because of good leadership and management of the subject.
- Teaching promotes the development of good independent learning skills in pupils.
- Thorough assessment and good feedback gives pupils a clear understanding of how to improve and enables them to achieve well.

Commentary

84. Teachers' assessments show standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 to be close to the national average. The assessments were similar in 2004. Inspection evidence confirms these assessments. Given that attainment on entry to the school was below average, these standards represent good achievement. The 2003 GCSE examination results were significantly above the national average and above the average for pupils' other subjects taken. The 2004 results were similar to those obtained in 2003. Girls obtain better results than boys and by a wider margin in 2004 than in 2003. This was because of weaknesses in boys' coursework. Inspection evidence shows that standards are rising strongly in Years 10 and 11.

Achievement is good for all groups of pupils in Years 7 to 11, including pupils with special educational needs.

85. Pupils show good skill and confidence in using computers. In communication work, Year 7 pupils combine text, graphics and sound, including voice-overs, effectively to produce slide presentations that are appropriate for a specified audience. A group of lower attaining Year 8 pupils showed very good concentration in successfully creating a system to transfer weather data from the Internet. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils are able to use a complex spreadsheet to model the finances of a pop concert and to investigate profit and loss scenarios. A particular strength is the development of independent learning skills and these contribute significantly to the good progress seen in Years 10 and 11, particularly in coursework.
86. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and over three quarters is good or better. The majority of lessons are characterised by good planning, clear objectives and effective teaching using a good range of strategies. The good subject knowledge of teachers is used well in question and answer sessions to enhance pupils' understanding, but opportunities to challenge higher attaining pupils are sometimes missed. Good assessment procedures give pupils a clear understanding of the level of their work and they receive very good feedback about how to improve. Good support enables pupils with special educational needs to achieve well. Gifted and talented pupils are well served and after school enrichment classes now support Year 11 boys with coursework.
87. Leadership and management of the ICT department are good. The head of department has been in post for 18 months and provides a good role model. There is a strong sense of direction and a team commitment to improvement. Resources in the main teaching rooms are good. The Internet filtering system is effective and well managed but there is not enough technical support. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 benefits from the coherent approach of the National Strategy and the provision of both GCSE and GNVQ courses is a strength. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen. Teachers' computer skills have improved and there is now good co-operation between relevant staff. There is good potential for further improvement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

88. Leadership and management of the whole-school approach to ICT are good. The quality of computer resources has been significantly upgraded, and is having a positive effect on teaching and learning in several subjects. However, at the time of the inspection the use of ICT in some subjects was restricted because of difficulties in access. Two new computer suites are about to be occupied and a new supply of computers will shortly be available. These facilities and resources will rectify the situation. Attention has been given to the development of teachers' computer skills, identified as a weakness at the time of the last inspection, and these are now good. Good use is made of recently installed projection equipment in English, science and geography. In music, composition software is used effectively to enhance learning. ICT is used well for administrative purposes and to make the storage and retrieval of assessment information more efficient.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Pupils achieve well because teaching is very good and assessment is used effectively.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs are given good support.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

89. At the end of Year 9 the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 in 2003 was average. The proportion attaining Level 6 was above average. This was an improvement on the previous two years. In 2004 there was a slight rise in the percentage attaining Level 5, but a slight drop in the percentage attaining the Level 6. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards overall are in line with expectations and higher attaining pupils are achieving standards that are above expectations. These standards represent good achievement when standards on entry to the school are taken into account.
90. The 2003 GCSE examination results were well above average. Girls do as well in geography as in the other subjects taken, but boys do better than in most of their other subjects. The 2004 results show further improvement. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was the highest for five years. In work seen, the current Year 11 pupils are not attaining as highly as in previous years, but are still matching expectations for this stage of the course. Standards in Year 10 are well above course expectations.
91. In Year 7 basic geography skills are quickly learned and pupils' writing skills and technical vocabulary are strengthened. This leads to good enquiries and is seen in Year 8 work on coastal features, for example. Pupils' confidence grows and they show increasing understanding of geographical processes and patterns. This is seen in Year 9 and, with greater sophistication in Year 11 coursework, in which pupils demonstrate the ability to hypothesise, analyse data and reach logical conclusions. Much of the coursework is improved by imaginative use of ICT, but the use of ICT is restricted because of difficulties of access to computers.
92. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and present work in a way that motivates and interests pupils. Teachers use a variety of strategies to engage pupils and their work is well planned to challenge pupils at all levels of attainment. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers. Lessons are well planned, with attention given to ways in which learning activities can be presented to capture the interest of boys. As a result, boys and girls work and contribute equally well in lessons. Pupils with special education needs are particularly well supported and make good progress. Pupils are attentive and remain fully engaged in the lessons' learning activities. They work equally well either individually or in small groups. Assessment information is used very effectively to set targets, monitor progress and to provide pupils with information on how they can improve their work.
93. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and have resulted in a united team capable of maintaining and further raising standards. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. There is a clear vision for the future and the potential for further improvement is very good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and in the 2004 GCSE examination boys achieved particularly well.
- Learning activities are not well matched to pupils' attainment levels in some lessons.
- Very good subject knowledge and high expectations underpin good teaching.
- Positive attitudes and good behaviour make a significant contribution to learning.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

94. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were slightly above average; a higher proportion of girls than boys gained grades A* to C but the difference was about the same as that observed nationally. Results improved in 2004, with a higher proportion of boys obtaining A* to C grades than girls. These results were well above the 2003 national average and represent good achievement.
95. Overall standards on entry in Year 7 are below average. All groups of pupils achieve well to reach standards that are above national expectations at the end of Year 9. Higher attaining pupils complete well-presented and technically accurate extended writing, for example in describing and explaining criticisms of the Catholic Church in the 16th century.
96. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve well and standards are above expectations. Pupils interpret and analyse sources well in reaching a clear understanding of the unreliable nature of sources, for example in investigating the Sharpeville massacre in their study of apartheid in South Africa. Lower attaining pupils' essay writing skills are weak; for example, they find it hard to link paragraphs and often draw weak conclusions. As in Years 7 to 9, there are only limited amounts of work produced involving computer-based research.
97. Pupils learn well because of good teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations; nearly all pupils respond positively to these expectations and make good progress as a result. Lessons are very well planned with good pace and challenge and very effective use of questioning to probe, consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. When teaching assistants are available to support the learning of lower attaining pupils, learning is very good. However, in some lessons, because learning tasks are not well matched to pupils' attainment levels they are not extended as much as they should be. A particularly notable feature of the teaching is the very good use of assessment to set targets, monitor progress and offer advice on the scope for improvement.
98. The subject is very well managed and led. Open and constructive relationships between teachers have led to very effective teamwork, culminating in a shared understanding and a common approach. The head of department has worked hard to improve the subject in areas such as assessment and the quality of teaching and learning, and improvement since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good subject leadership is having a significant impact on provision and standards.
- ICT is used effectively to enhance presentation but the lack of more sophisticated computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) programs restricts access to higher GCSE grades.
- The effective use of assessment is helping to raise standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Effective classroom management strategies are not being identified and shared.

Commentary

99. Standards on entry in Year 7 are below national expectations. Pupils make good progress during Years 7 to 9 and are average by the end of Year 9. In 2003 the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examination was average. The department also teaches child development and taking these examination grades into account, the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades was above average. Girls outperformed boys. The 2004 results were similar to those obtained in 2003, although there was an improvement in the results obtained by boys in resistant materials. Taking standards at the end of Year 9 into account, achievement was satisfactory. Recent changes in the department have stimulated interest in the subject and this has led to an increase in the numbers of pupils opting for design and technology at the end of Year 9. There has also been an increase in the number of boys opting for food technology.
100. Pupils are making good progress in Years 7 to 9 because schemes of work have been improved and effectively implemented. As a result pupils are working with a wider range of materials and this is leading to a strengthening of their making techniques. Good use is made of National Curriculum level descriptors to ensure that there is an appropriate focus on design. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection and this is contributing to the development of pupils' research and presentation skills. However, the lack of suitable CAD/CAM programs makes it difficult for pupils to obtain higher grades in the GCSE examination. Basic graphics skills were identified as a weakness in the last report and these are still inconsistent. This weakness reduces the usefulness of working drawings. Assessment is precise and used effectively to provide pupils with information on what they must do in order to improve. All pupils benefit from detailed individual attention from their teachers, both in lessons and through their design booklets. Assessment is used effectively in lower sets where the match of work to pupils' attainment levels is very good.
101. Progress in Years 10 and 11 has not been as good as in Years 7 to 9 because of difficulties in staffing. These difficulties have now been resolved. The quality of work seen is broadly in line with course expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement by the end of Year 11. However, in food technology and child development, where staffing has been more consistent, achievement is good and standards are above average.
102. Teaching and learning are predominantly good. The most effective lessons are very well planned and capitalise on pupils' personal experience. Assessment is used effectively to guide the planning of lessons and ensures that learning tasks are well matched to pupils' attainment levels. Pupils are encouraged to assess each other's work and suggest how designs might be improved. In a few lessons weaknesses in classroom management and inappropriate learning activities failed to maintain pupils' interest. These weaknesses contributed to unsatisfactory teaching in one Year 8 lesson. Good displays of pupils' work stimulate pupils' interest and frequent references to subject-specific key words support the development of pupils' literacy skills.
103. Subject leadership is very good. The recently appointed head of department is developing a strong team of teachers and support staff who are beginning to shape a department that shares commitment to

continued improvement. Management is good. Because of time restrictions it is not possible for teachers to identify and share good practice in a systematic way. This is restricting progress. The accommodation for food technology, textiles and child development has been improved. Although resistant materials and graphics have good size workshops, the facilities are out of date and lack a design atmosphere. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection and the plans drawn up by the head of department suggest very good potential for further improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

104. **Drama** was sampled. Results in the drama GCSE examination in 2003 were in line with the national average for the percentage of grades A* to C, while the percentage of A* and A grades was just above average. There was a dip in the provisional results for 2004 to a level below the national average. In the lesson seen, teaching was good and pupils showed an exemplary attitude to the subject. They worked hard and showed a serious and well-focused approach. There are good accommodation and facilities for drama. The after school drama club offers good opportunities for pupils to improve their drama skills and pupils across the age range work well together to perform thoughtfully and unself-consciously.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls' GCSE results improved sharply in 2004.
- Year 10 and 11 boys' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- There are weaknesses in leadership and management.
- The department does not have enough resources.

Commentary

105. Teachers' assessments show that standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. In 2004, proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 rose, but remained below the 2003 national average. Because of staffing difficulties GCSE results were well below average in 2003. With staffing issues resolved, GCSE overall results improved in 2004 and were similar to those achieved in 2002, but pupils achieved less well in art than in other subjects. Boys' performance declined while girls' improved. Boys' performance was poor.
106. Inspection evidence shows standards in Years 7 to 9 to be in line with expectations for the age range and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make gains in the knowledge of artists' work and use of a range of media suited to their attainment levels. Though practical skills are satisfactory, pupils use their sketchbooks to complete set exercises rather than to develop their own ideas. In Years 10 and 11 standards are below expectations and many pupils, and particularly boys, are underachieving. The rate of progress is too slow and pupils' work does not show enough individuality. They have not undertaken enough individual research or developed their own ideas. This is particularly so of the boys and the gifted and talented. Projects are too closely prescribed by teaching. As a result there is little evidence of individual expression, which is the main characteristic of higher attainment. Pupils occasionally write about artists' work but their skills of critical analysis are not as strong as they should be. ICT is used to obtain information about artists from the Internet but is not used enough to manipulate images. Pupils use number to measure and estimate appropriately. Lower attaining pupils including those with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress because of the individual help teachers provide.
107. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, lessons are usually well structured. Most have a good starter activity to secure pupils' attention and are then followed with a suitable sequence of well-timed activities. However, most lessons do not

finish with a review to enable pupils to consolidate their learning. In Years 10 and 11, most lessons lack pace and rigour. Many lessons do not have an identifiable start, with pupils simply proceeding with coursework, with support provided as the need arises. As a result pupils adopt a far too relaxed approach. Many talk about unrelated matters as they work, progress is slow and little is achieved.

108. Through determined leadership and management the department is beginning to recover from the staffing difficulties that have affected examination results in the past. However, although there are signs of improvement in provision, weaknesses in teaching and learning leading to underachievement in Years 10 and 11, are linked to weaknesses in leadership and management. Monitoring is not rigorous enough and there is too much inconsistency in teaching. The GCSE course is not supported by a detailed scheme of work and teaching does not cater well for boys' learning needs. Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to use ICT, photography or to engage in three-dimensional work. Effective use is made of assessment information to set targets and provide pupils with feedback on performance. Not enough use is made of visits to art galleries or museums to enrich the curriculum. The department does not have enough technician time and some areas are untidy.
109. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have fallen, as has the quality of teaching. The shortcomings in the use of ICT and space for storage remain.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching promotes good learning.
- New assessment procedures are providing pupils with clearer guidance on the progress they are making.
- The department has outgrown its present accommodation and is in urgent need of additional resources.
- Extra-curricular activities are restricted by a shortage of rehearsal time.

Commentary

110. The 2003 teachers' assessments show that attainment at the end of Year 9 was above average. The proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examination was well above average. In 2004 attainment at the end of Year 9 was slightly higher than the previous year and GCSE results were still well above the 2003 national average. These results represent very good achievement.
111. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 9 are above national expectations. As pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 is well below average overall, these standards represent very good achievement. However, the need to change classrooms to ensure that all Year 7 to 9 classes receive some ICT experience is having an adverse impact on progress. This situation is due to be resolved when additional computers are installed in the second classroom. Work seen indicated that standards in Years 10 and 11 are also above expectations.
112. Teaching and learning are good, and in some lessons very good. In Years 7 to 9, pupils enjoy the practical nature of the course and make good progress because tasks are well suited to their attainment levels. Teaching develops pupils' practical musical skills and promotes very good social interaction through paired and group activities, enabling pupils to work at different levels according to their ability. As a result pupils with special educational needs make good progress and higher attaining pupils receive realistic challenges. Pupils' learning is also enhanced by teachers' good lesson planning, clear explanations and appropriate allocation of time for the completion of tasks. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject, which they use well to further pupils' musical skills. Some use is made of key words, but this could be made more effective if the words relevant to the module being studied were displayed at the front of the classroom and referred to regularly during lessons. Teachers make effective use of resources to reinforce pupils' learning and further understanding. Year 10 and 11

lessons start with crisp questioning sessions that set the tone for the remainder of the lesson. Very good relationships between pupils and staff are a feature of lessons in the department.

113. Leadership of the subject is very good. Management is good and good progress has been made since the last inspection. Although no issues were raised in the last report the curriculum has been revised and now includes more frequent use of ICT. However, progress in the use of ICT is restricted by difficulties in accessing computers and there is a shortage of percussion instruments. Both of these shortages are having an adverse impact on teaching and learning. There are not enough planned activities that reflect traditions and influences from other cultures. There is a need for more rigorous target setting in Years 7 to 9. Revised assessment procedures have recently been introduced. These procedures are very good but will require time before their impact is fully seen. The department has outgrown the present accommodation. There are not enough practice rooms and lessons are disrupted by the sounds coming from instrumental lessons taking place in the existing practice rooms. The department struggles to provide enrichment activities, but the shortened lunch break is having an adverse effect on attendance, repertoire, and standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is enabling pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils can evaluate their own and others' work when given the opportunity, but these are too infrequent.
- Good teacher-pupil relationships contribute to a pleasant learning environment.
- GCSE marking does not provide pupils with enough information on how to improve the quality of their work.

Commentary

114. The 2003 GCSE results were below the national average with boys performing less well than girls. The results significantly improved in 2004. The gap between the boys' and girls' performance narrowed, with practical skills being above average. Standards in the core course at the end of Year 11 are consistent with the standards expected at this age. Pupils develop skills in a wide range of activities and in games and show a greater degree of tactical awareness. Through peer coaching and umpiring they also develop the ability to identify how performance can be improved and an understanding of the rules of different sports. Standards at the end of Year 11 represent good achievement when standards on entry are taken into account.
115. Teachers' assessments show that standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. In 2004, the assessments were broadly in line with the 2003 national average. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 9 are presently consistent with expectations for the
- age group. Pupils enter the school with physical skills below expectations, but pupils of all backgrounds make good progress during Years 7 to 9. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls.
116. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons that contain a series of increasingly demanding physical activities. Pupils respond well to these tasks. They work well in pairs and groups to develop skills into particular techniques that can be applied in different indoor and outdoor games. Most respond well when given opportunities to engage in independent learning although the concentration of some wavers when not directly supervised. When this occurs, standards fall and progress is slowed. Good relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, provide a supportive learning environment. In this environment, pupils develop confidence and are willing to try out new ideas. In the GCSE course encouraging comments

are made on the theory work but not enough information is provided on how the work can be improved. Comments are not always acted on by pupils or followed up by the teachers. This means that pupils are not focused on key areas for improvement and contributes to the weaker results in the GCSE theory paper.

117. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a clear commitment to improvement and teachers working well together as a team. Schemes of work have been improved since the last inspection and there is now a better balance between the learning activities offered. The use of assessment information for target setting and monitoring has improved, although there is still more work to be done. Since the last inspection new courses have been introduced, teaching has improved and progress made on all of the issues for action. This represents good improvement.

BUSINESS

118. **Business studies** was sampled. A quarter of the pupils in Years 10 and 11 take the course. In 2003, the GCSE examination results were below average with just under half of students obtaining A* to C grades and nearly nine out of ten A* to G grades. In 2004, a lower attaining group obtained lower results. Two lessons were observed during the inspection. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were making good progress in learning how to market a fizzy fruit drink. Pupils worked effectively in groups to decide how to price, package, advertise and market the product. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils made satisfactory progress in revising financial terms and developing a business plan, including ways to raise finance. The course is becoming an increasingly popular option for higher attaining pupils.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

119. **Personal, social, and health education** is taught alongside citizenship and careers in regular weekly lessons. In these lessons tutors build upon their strong and supportive relationships with the pupils in their classes. In the one lesson observed during the inspection, teaching and learning were very good. Legal requirements to cover sex education and substance abuse are fully met. The successful fusion of the original PSHE curriculum with those of careers education and citizenship has produced a series of complementary and interrelated units that make up a programme of study that contributes much to pupils' personal development.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject co-ordinator's clear vision and excellent organisational skills have a significant impact on provision and standards.
- Effective planning with good teaching provides a good stimulus for learning.
- The scheme of work is well planned to prepare young people for life-long learning.
- References to citizenship are made in the schemes of work of other subjects, but learning is not reinforced by drawing pupils' attention to citizenship elements as they arise in lessons.
- End of year reports do not contain specific reference to citizenship.

Commentary

120. The 2004 teachers' assessments show that by the end of Year 9 the attainment of the large majority of pupils was consistent or well above national expectations. More boys gained Level 5 than girls, but more girls reached Level 6. As pupils do not start citizenship until Year 7 their attainment represents very good achievement.

121. Citizenship is combined with PSHE and careers and taught regularly by form tutors once a week throughout the school year. Citizenship was also included in schemes of work in most other subjects, but in lessons observed the connections between the topics being studied and citizenship were not drawn to pupils' attention.
122. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups. One lesson on drugs given by a visiting speaker was very good. Other lessons observed covered a wide range of topics including law and justice, preparing a curriculum vitae and the make up of local government. Lessons are well prepared and resourced with a wide range of interesting activities to illustrate the concepts being learnt. Consequently, pupils of all attainment levels participate whole heartedly and show enjoyment in lessons. The supportive learning environment builds pupils' confidence and encourages them to discuss sensitive issues in a mature manner. Departments make an invaluable contribution to citizenship through the wide variety of visits they offer. However specific citizenship visits, for example to the law courts, are not possible because of the limited amount of time allocated to the subject. To compensate for this, effective use is made of visiting speakers from a wide range of agencies to enrich pupils' learning.
123. The leadership of the subject is excellent. The subject is purposefully led and managed by a dedicated teacher who has inspired the present programme. She has fused the original PSHE curriculum seamlessly with those of careers education and citizenship to produce a series of complementary and interrelated units that very successfully contribute to pupils' personal development. Management is very good. Consistency in teaching is ensured by the careful preparation and distribution of resource material. This underpins the good teaching and learning seen in the subject. However, because of the time required to manage citizenship throughout the whole school, alongside a normal teaching timetable, it has not been possible for the co-ordinator to monitor coverage of citizenship in other subjects. There is a lack of storage space for citizenship resources and a need for clerical support to assist in the preparation of resource materials. The curriculum is excellent and regular reviews ensure that the units are relevant to pupils' personal development. Assessment has been thoughtfully constructed to include pupil self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment. Grade descriptors have been prepared for each module and these are fully discussed with the pupils before assessment takes place. However, end of year reports do not mention citizenship as a separate subject and pupils often have no record of the coverage of citizenship in other subjects. Nevertheless, the subject has been very successfully established and is now a strength of the school.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003 [the latest year for which national comparisons are available].

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	2	50	65	0	11	10	21
Business studies	1	100	76	0	16	40	26
History	2	100	81	0	20	35	29
Information technology	7	72	67	0	11	20	22
Music	2	100	87	50	21	40	31
Other social studies	10	30	70	0	17	9	24
Sociology	5	20	72	0	18	8	25

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	5	40	99	0	50	24	88
Biology	3	33	96	0	39	13	79
Business studies	13	100	99	8	37	71	80
Communication studies	5	100	99	40	38	80	82
Dance	1	100	99	100	45	100	84
English literature	21	100	99	24	47	78	87
French	5	100	99	0	52	60	88
Design and technology	2	100	98	0	35	70	78
Geography	14	100	99	7	45	64	84
History	5	100	99	40	45	76	87
Information technology	9	89	96	22	25	60	70
Mathematics	1	100	99	0	56	60	89
Music	2	100	99	0	39	50	81
Other languages	2	100	97	100	65	110	94
Other social studies	13	92	97	31	43	72	82
Physics	1	100	97	0	45	80	82
Religious studies	6	100	99	100	47	113	86
Sociology	6	100	98	33	44	87	84
Sport/PE studies	2	50	98	0	31	20	75

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

124. English was inspected in detail and **French** was sampled. In 2004, the single student entered for A-level French gained Grade C. In the Year 12 lesson observed, teaching was good. Students made satisfactory progress in comprehension work but their contribution to class work was inhibited by their lack of oral confidence.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because good teaching and target setting motivate students.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the needs of individual students and students feel well supported.
- Very good analysis of examination results identifies strengths and areas for development in provision.
- Good assessment procedures, consistently applied, identify underachievement.
- There is a good programme for enrichment of the curriculum.

Commentary

125. Standards in A-level English literature in 2003 were below the national average, although all students attained grades in the A to D range. Results for 2004 show a similar picture. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Year 12 and 13 are in line with what is seen nationally.
126. Achievement is satisfactory. There is a very flexible policy on entry to the course and a significant minority of students starts the course with prior attainment in English, which does not provide a secure foundation for further study. These students achieve well to attain an AS or A-level grade. Fewer students with higher prior attainment go on to attain A or B grades and their achievement is satisfactory. Students currently in Year 12 and 13 are achieving well. A high proportion of Year 13 students met or exceeded the targets set for them at AS-level and this forms a good basis for their continued achievement at A-level.
127. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are planned well to meet the needs of the wide range of attainment to be found in each group and teachers use effective strategies to ensure that individual needs are met. The response of students is lively and enthusiastic. Lessons offer an appropriately high level of challenge and students are motivated to work hard. The good, extensive use of questioning and discussion offers an effective balance of challenge and support and students make good progress through this exchange of ideas. Teachers provide very good suggestions and support to encourage students' additional reading and there is a clear expectation that students should research further sources of additional information. There is very good marking of work, including students' notes and personal research, in order to identify areas of weakness and offer specific suggestions for improvement.
128. The quality of leadership and management is very good. There is very good use of teamwork among sixth form teachers, who all contribute to and revise the schemes of work for each module. The very thorough analysis of both performance data and on-going work effectively identifies strengths and areas for development in teaching. There are now good procedures for assessment and the identification of underachievement and students who are in danger of not making sufficient progress are given individual support. Students are all very clear about their individual targets and how to meet them. There is a good programme of

enrichment of the curriculum. Students speak particularly warmly of their choice of English as a sixth form subject. They are especially appreciative of the quality of support and advice they receive from their teachers.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

129. The standard of literacy in other sixth form subjects is satisfactory. There are sufficient opportunities for students to take part in discussion, except in art, and in general the quality of their contributions are satisfactory. In history oral contributions are too brief, since students do not develop or illustrate their answers sufficiently. In business studies, students make good progress through participation in discussion. Standards of writing are variable but satisfactory overall. In mathematics, students make good notes, while in history students have the opportunity to undertake a range of writing tasks and their standards are satisfactory. In business studies the redrafting of written work improves the standard of writing, although students continue to make errors in spelling and punctuation. In art, students have too few opportunities for written work.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are improving.
- Teachers are well qualified and their subject knowledge is good.
- Students have very good attitudes and commitment to learning.
- Learning approaches are too narrow and the contexts through which mathematics is taught are limited.

Commentary

130. There were no candidates taking A-level mathematics in 2003. In the A-level examination in 2004, all but one student gained at least grade E. This represents satisfactory achievement relative to their performance in GCSE examinations, with some students exceeding expectations. The standards of the current Year 13 students are above average and they are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. In lessons students achieve very well because of teaching that is rigorous and challenging. Students from all backgrounds achieve equally well.
131. Standards of work seen during the inspection were consistent with expectations for this stage of the course. Because students enter Year 12 with a good base of mathematical knowledge and understanding gained at GCSE they quickly bridge the gap to AS-level. In a very good Year 12 lesson students investigated the graphs of different equations and through using graphical calculators effectively they were able to assess similarities and points of variance. In a Year 13 lesson students studying the mechanics module applied the laws of motion and momentum confidently to solve a range of problems associated with energy.
132. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject at this level are very good. There is rigorous teaching of the theory and principles of mathematics and teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is transmitted to the students. All lessons seen were characterised by very good relationships and collaborative learning. Together with their very good attitudes, this enables students to approach tasks with confidence, often resulting in very good achievement in lessons. However, there are too few occasions for students to work independently and widen their learning approaches generally, such as through open-ended tasks. Students are informed of their progress through regular assessment of their work and discussion in class.
133. Leadership and management are good. The department has a clear sense of purpose and a desire to raise the profile of mathematics within the school. There is a strong team of experienced teachers who are knowledgeable about the requirements of examinations. This is a significant factor in the increase in the number of students studying mathematics in the current Year 12. The department has undertaken appropriate preparation for the new A-level courses beginning this September. There is, however, limited use of ICT and practical activities to support learning and the contexts in which mathematics is

applied are too narrow. There has been good progress since the last inspection and there is the capacity to improve further because of good leadership.

Mathematics across the curriculum

134. Students' mathematical knowledge and skills are sufficiently well developed for the needs of their chosen courses. For example, in chemistry students make good use of their knowledge of graphs and are able to evaluate formulae correctly. In sociology students are able to understand and effectively interpret information and statistical data.

SCIENCE

135. Whilst chemistry was the focus subject for this inspection, **biology** was also sampled. There were too few students to compare results with national averages in 2003. In the lesson observed teaching was good and students in Year 13 made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of genetics. Physics was not sampled because the school does not offer the subject at AS or A-level and students attend lessons at another school in the federation.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- Although the quality of teaching is good, learning is satisfactory.
- The A-level results in 2004 were broadly as predicted, but AS-level results were below those expected in comparison with students' GCSE results.
- Students do not make the best of opportunities for supported self-learning.

Commentary

136. In 2003, no students were entered for the GCE A-level examination in chemistry. In 2004, the number of students entered for the subject was low. Results were close to those expected relative to students' GCSE grades. AS-level results in 2003 were below those predicted by the students' GCSE results. As a result of significant staffing difficulties within the past two years, examination results, overall, have been below expectations.
137. The standards of Year 13 students are average. Work seen during the inspection shows that achievement is satisfactory and, for the majority of students, is as expected based on their GCSE performance. Higher attaining students, for example, are making good gains in their understanding of reaction kinetics, being able to determine the 'order' of a chemical reaction using the 'initial rates' technique. On the other hand, there is evidence that not all pupils take advantage of the opportunities to supplement their classroom learning with the additional reading and research that are essential for success at this level.
138. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course. Most are successfully moving on from GCSE work into new areas of chemistry and their achievement is satisfactory. Their written work is generally well presented and they display a high degree of numerical competency.
139. Teaching is good. The use of good subject knowledge, coupled with good and focused lesson planning, maintains interest and engenders learning. Good use is made of assessment to monitor students' progress against targets, to identify underachievement and adjust teaching accordingly. Day-to-day marking is thorough and provides good guidance for students on how to improve.
140. Learning in the classroom is satisfactory. Students generally work hard, respond well to challenge and show interest in their work. They support and help each other and enter into mature discussion as part

of their learning. However, there are indications that a significant proportion of students does insufficient independent reading and research to support classroom work. For example, there is still some confusion in the knowledge and understanding of how to determine relative atomic masses using a mass spectrometer because, although the basic process has been well explained in lessons, not all students have consolidated this by further reading.

141. Leadership and management are good. The new teacher in charge of chemistry provides a clear and focused direction for the subject and he is committed to improving standards. Although there are minor deficiencies in some basic equipment, there is a good range of learning support materials. The number of teachers and their qualifications are adequate. There has been little significant improvement since the last inspection because examination results deteriorated during the period of staffing uncertainty in the department, but the capacity to improve is now good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

142. **ICT** was sampled during the inspection and two lessons were observed. In a good Year 12 lesson standards were in line with national expectations but in a satisfactory Year 13 lesson standards were below average. In the past the department has operated an inclusive, open access policy for entry to the course but evidence suggests that the new policy of a more selective intake to Year 12 is leading to higher standards. Students show lively involvement in discussions and good independent learning skills. Relationships are good and the strong subject knowledge of teachers is used well to support students' learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

143. Students show good skill and confidence in using computers and there is much evidence of the use of ICT in learning assignments, coursework projects and Internet research. Access to computers is satisfactory. Year 13 students make effective use of the resources to research higher education courses and receive good support in completing applications online.

HUMANITIES

144. History and sociology were inspected in detail and geography and psychology were sampled. In **geography**, standards at AS and A-level were well below the national average in 2003 after a period of staffing problems. In 2004 there has been a clear improvement, with every student gaining a pass grade in AS and A-level examinations. Current teaching is very good and those recruited to the sixth form gained high grades at GCSE. In work seen, standards are at the national average. In **psychology** the 2004 A-level results rose to be well above the 2003 results and the 2003 national average. One Year 13 lesson and two Year 12 lessons were observed. In the Year 13 lesson teaching and learning were good and in one of the Year 12 lessons, satisfactory. However, in the other Year 12 lesson, although teaching was satisfactory, progress was impeded by the very immature behaviour of a small group of male students. The lesson was well planned to engage students in a series of interesting activities, but the disruptive behaviour of this group of students occupied too much of the teacher's time and learning slowed as a result.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of consistently good teaching.
- Teaching strategies do not sufficiently encourage students to be independent.
- Very good leadership ensures that performance is reviewed and high standards are maintained.
- The use of computers in lessons is inconsistent.

Commentary

145. Students have traditionally performed better at A-level than at AS-level. This reflects the lower starting levels of students in Year 12. In 2003 results at A-level were in line with the national average, but results fell in 2004, particularly at the higher grades. Over the last three years all students entered for A-level have gained at least a pass grade. The small numbers involved make comparisons with national data unreliable.
146. Year 12 students start the course with below average standards. They benefit from consistently good teaching and consequently achieve well. Entry requirements to the current AS course have been tightened and this helps to explain the better standards of work seen in Year 12. The achievement of some high attaining students is held back by their reluctance to read and research more widely.
147. In work seen students have good knowledge of topics such as events in pre-revolutionary France. They correctly identify the consequences of the different interpretations of poverty in Victorian Britain. High attaining students deploy their knowledge well in essay work, arguing their point logically and drawing accurate conclusions. Other students tend to describe rather than analyse. Literacy problems are evident in some students' writing and when they struggle with subject vocabulary. Most do not consistently link their learning from other areas of their course, or put their learning of a topic into a wider context. Few students take the initiative to raise questions of the work covered.
148. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure, and consequently good focused questions guide students' learning in lessons well. The planning of lessons is good, allowing for the introduction of some challenging work and good resources. Time targets ensure students' concentration. There is, however, an inconsistent use of objectives for learning that would help guide students and indicate the main aims of the lesson. Marking of work is supportive, but not all teachers consistently set short-term targets for students.
149. Very good leadership has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection. Very good assessment procedures include student self-evaluation and regular reviews of individual progress. Numbers of students are rising and they hold positive views of the subject and the teachers' commitment. The use of computers in lessons is now under review, although the number of library books is limited. Students benefit from a well-led team of teachers who are committed to improvement.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching enables students to achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Very good classroom relationships and study support notes underpin good learning.
- Teaching does not adequately develop students' independence and self-reliance.
- Students enjoy the subject and are opting for it in increasing numbers.

Commentary

150. Results in the A-level examinations have fluctuated in recent years. In 2003 they were above average in terms of the average point score per entry but the proportion of candidates gaining A and B grades was below average. In 2004 results improved and the proportion achieving the higher grades was significantly higher than in 2003.
151. In work seen in both Years 12 and 13 standards are in line with expectations. This reflects good achievement as many of the increasing numbers opting for the subject begin the course with below average levels of prior attainment. Higher attaining students' files are well organised and contain

detailed notes, whereas the work of lower attaining students contains too many spelling errors, which impair their ability to communicate their ideas accurately. As a result of the close and trusting atmosphere in lessons students are confident in sharing experiences in discussion, which enables them to learn well from each other's ideas. Most students reveal a good understanding of relevant theories but they are unlikely to use one sociological perspective to criticise another.

152. Students learn well because of the teacher's clear explanations arising from his very good subject knowledge and very thorough planning. All lessons observed had a clear focus on discussion, which enabled students to clarify and consolidate their understanding well. High expectations and very good classroom relationships mean that students feel well known and supported in their studies. However, students do not develop as much independence in their learning as they might because of cramped accommodation that limits the range of teaching and learning methods. In addition, insufficient opportunities to use computers for research and a limited range of sociological texts, studies and periodicals restrict students' scope to widen their knowledge of contemporary British society and current affairs.
153. The subject is well managed and led and students feel well known and supported by their teacher, although, as he is only in school two days a week, access to support, guidance and additional resources is more limited than is normally the case. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory as standards are rising and more students are opting for the subject.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

154. Art and theatre studies were inspected in detail and music was sampled. **Music** examination results over recent years have been below national averages, and standards do not reflect the success achieved at GCSE. In the A-level lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory overall, but learning was unsatisfactory. Students rely heavily on input from the teacher and do not contribute confidently and knowledgeably to the learning in lessons. Lessons were too teacher directed and little evidence was seen of students doing extra listening, reading or research. Neither do they attempt to play major themes from their set works on their own instrument. Planning does not anticipate work to be covered in the next lesson and consequently students are not given guidance as to how to prepare in advance.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The results in A-level examinations improved considerably in 2004.
- Standards in Year 13 are as expected given students' attainment on entry to the course.
- Teaching is good.
- Satisfactory management has secured good teaching but many shortcomings remain apparent.

Commentary

155. Results in A-level examinations were well below average in 2003 although in 2004 they improved significantly. Standards in Year 13 are below average but students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. Their work shows little evidence of the strength of personal expression and confidence characteristic of higher standards. Students are very dependent on teachers to provide them with direction. Standards in Year 12 are in line with expectations for this stage of the course. Students use media tentatively but competently. Achievement is good, and students express emotions well using a wide variety of media imaginatively.
156. Teaching is good overall. It is knowledgeable and makes good use of specialist terms. Teaching provides good examples for pupils to contrast and compare, for instance, child art with the work of artists such as Juan Miro. There are three teachers, each bringing a different approach to the subject. Students are keen to learn and apply themselves well to the set tasks. For example, in an exercise on

order and chaos students were making sculptures using a wide range of colourful media to express emotions such as anger and incorporating their interpretation of a painting they had studied. Students rapidly became aware of the range of possibilities of using three-dimensional materials. They showed enjoyment and worked very hard throughout, even those expressing some initial apprehension. Although each lesson provides an opportunity for students to respond, there is less evidence of student initiated work. This is unusual for Year 13 at this stage of their course, when they are expected to be working on extended personal projects.

157. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have secured a satisfactory level of provision overall, but there are significant weaknesses. The course does not benefit from a sufficiently thorough scheme of work. Students are exposed to a very limited range of media and art experiences such as working with artists or visiting galleries and museums as part of the course. Accommodation is very limited for the number of students and storage is inadequate. The department provides a very limited range of resources, and there is no clear identification of what needs to be done to improve standards.
158. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. Standards are similar and teaching is still good but the high standard of drawing is no longer as evident.

Theatre studies

Provision in theatre studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of a joint theatre studies course with another federation school has been successfully accomplished. Rising numbers demonstrate its increasing popularity.
- Good teaching encourages students to be creative and independent.
- Good collaboration with the partner school ensures effective monitoring and assessment of students' progress.
- Students have positive attitudes towards the subject but find it difficult at times to maintain focus and fully absorb themselves in their practical work.

Commentary

159. The popularity of the subject at GCSE and increasing demand from students have led the school to develop a course jointly with another school in the federation and the first students to take this new theatre studies course are currently in Year 13. The four students who sat A-level theatre studies in 2004 at another federation school all achieved grades in the C to E range.
160. Standards are below average and this was reflected in the 2004 AS-level results. Students performed best in the practical devised piece and higher and average attaining students produced accompanying portfolios that show good insight about the process of devising. The portfolios of lower attaining students tend to be descriptive and lack evaluative comment. Most students performed least well in the theory paper for Unit 2, Approaches to Text. The two departments have responded energetically. Teachers have analysed and steps are now being taken to address the identified problems to ensure that future students and those who are resitting the paper are better prepared.
161. Achievement is satisfactory. Students are developing good knowledge and understanding of dramatic theories and practitioners and they demonstrate an ability to relate these theories to their own practical work. However, students' practical skills in lessons do not currently match their results in practical tests. They still show some diffidence in performing and are not as focused and absorbed in their improvised work as would be expected. Some have yet to develop the skill of holding the moment at the end of their presentations to allow the full impact of their work to take effect on the audience.
162. Teaching and learning are good. Particular strengths include the use of assessment to give immediate feedback and to show how work can be improved. There is also good intellectual challenge, and theory

and practice are well integrated in the teaching methods used. Students are very positive about the subject. They recognise that it makes different demands on them and encourages them to be independent learners. It stimulates creativity, develops critical and evaluative skills, and contributes well to the key skills of problem solving and working with others. Students from the two schools collaborate well, feeling that the joint venture has improved their communication and social skills.

163. The department is well led and managed. The two teachers, although not specialists, are knowledgeable and confident, and continue to engage in professional development to further develop their expertise. Close collaboration between the two departments means that students are well monitored and supported. Good progress has been made in establishing the new course and there is a joint commitment to further improvement. This is exemplified in the constructive approach taken to the AS-level results.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher's knowledge is very good and used effectively to engage and enthuse students.
- Assessment is very good and students know what they have to do to improve.
- The lack of access to computers in lessons adversely affects standards.

Commentary

164. Twenty per cent of the students in the sixth form now take the subject, a proportion that is increasing. Standards on entry to the sixth form are below average. In 2003, the A-level results were below the national average with fewer than one in ten students obtaining A or B grades. All students obtained at least a pass grade with boys performing better than girls. In 2004, the results show that the proportion of students obtaining A or B grades was much higher and also that girls' performance was better than that of the boys. Standards in the lessons seen were broadly in line with national expectations. Achievement is good and has improved over the past two years.
165. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and sometimes very good. The teacher is experienced and has a secure knowledge of the subject. The practice of asking students about current economic data at the beginning of lessons is very good. The teacher involves students well by asking questions as lessons progress although boys respond more readily than girls. The teacher uses an effective range of teaching methods and maintains a good pace in lessons. As a result, the attitudes of students and their concentration are good and all students are keen to learn. Work is regularly marked, assessed and commented on very thoroughly. Students are prepared for examinations well. As a result, students are always aware of what they have to do to improve. Whilst students regularly use computers at home, the lack of access to computers during lessons adversely affects standards.
166. A small number of students take the subject at a neighbouring school, a member of the South-West Coventry Federation. In 2004, a student who did not have the required entry qualifications for the GCE course took the GNVQ at intermediate level in Year 12 and obtained a distinction. She has now progressed to the GCE course. However, few students take the opportunity to develop themselves in this way and the number of students on the vocational courses available within the Federation is small.
167. All teaching is undertaken by a recently appointed highly experienced specialist teacher who has done much to improve standards and who manages the subject well. However, because of her considerable responsibilities as head of sixth form, some aspects of leadership, strategic planning and development are weak. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The number of students taking the

subject has increased and standards have been maintained. The GNVQ course has been discontinued and there is now no designated subject leader.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

168. No subjects in this curriculum area were inspected in detail but the new **BTEC Level 2 course in caring** was sampled. It is too early in the course to assess standards. In the lesson seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory. The teacher approached the topic, the design of a questionnaire, at a level appropriate to the needs of the students.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

169. General education courses were sampled. In **personal, social and health education**, Year 12 students worked with their tutors to identify targets and consider how they might broaden their horizons. Year 13 students were well supported by their tutors as they worked on their applications to higher education. In the optional recreational physical education session, more boys than girls participated and organised their own activities. They demonstrated good skill levels and the experience was a positive one. An effective lesson preparing students for the Junior Sports Leader Award was seen. Students took responsibility for designing and running warm-up sessions as part of the training, which will enable them to work with primary school pupils in the summer term.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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