

INSPECTION REPORT

BUDMOUTH TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Weymouth, Dorset

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113902

Headteacher: Mr D Akers

Lead inspector: R C Drew

Dates of inspection: 1 – 5 November 2004

Inspection number: 268579

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1581
School address:	Chickerell Road Weymouth Dorset
Postcode:	DT4 9SY
Telephone number:	01305 830500
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Allan Davies
Date of previous inspection:	1 February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a larger than average 11 to 18 comprehensive school with 1581 pupils on roll, including 297 sixth-form students. It draws its pupils from Weymouth and Portland and parts of the surrounding area. Ninety-seven per cent of pupils are of white (British) origin with two or three pupils coming from each of several ethnic minority communities. Most years, only one or two pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is just below average. Fourteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs, a broadly average figure, but the school also provides for 10 pupils with Asperger's syndrome from across the local authority. Pupils' socio-economic backgrounds broadly match the national range and their prior attainment is also currently average. Older pupils, however, entered the school with below-average attainment. The school is expanding rapidly, especially in the sixth form. It has had Technology College status for eight years and has recently become a Leading Edge school. It has received many awards including those of Sportsmark Gold, Healthy Schools, National Award for Peer Mentoring and Investors in People. The headteacher was appointed in 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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19720	Debbie Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector	
30899	Ken Boden	Team inspector	Engineering (sixth form) Resistant materials (sixth form) Design and technology
23004	Chris Taylor	Team inspector	Geography Geography (sixth form)
11975	Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)
30427	Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History History (sixth form)
10391	Valerie du Plergny	Team inspector	Drama (sixth form) Music
3100	Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
21785	Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	English as an additional language SCV3 (sixth form) Science
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Information and communication technology (sixth form) Special educational needs unit
19404	Les Schubeler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form) Work related learning
17709	Alan Giles	Team inspector	Physical education Physical education (sixth form) Psychology (sixth form)
31680	Phil Redican	Team inspector	Art and design Art V2 (sixth form) Special educational needs
10448	Michael Elson	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education
	Russell Andrews	Team inspector	Physics (sixth form)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of this school is very good. It enables pupils to make very good progress across Years 7 to 11 because teaching and learning are very effective and leadership is outstanding. With broadly average spending per pupil, value for money is very good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- Value-added, or achievement, in Years 7 to 11 is very good and standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the school is very well managed.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and the involvement of pupils in the work of the school is excellent. Care for students is excellent.
- There is a very good curriculum, enriched by excellent extra-curricular activities.
- Outstanding design and technology provision confirms the success of the school as a technology college.
- Links with parents are very good and they are excellent with business and the wider community. The work related learning programme is excellent.
- Performing arts provision is a strength of the school.
- Valued-added in the sixth form, while satisfactory, is not as marked as in the main school.
- Pupils are given very good practical guidance on citizenship but formal coverage of the subject is unsatisfactory.
- Overall, the leadership and management of subjects are very good, but management systems in the sixth form and leadership in English are only satisfactory.

Since the last inspection in 1999, the school has transformed its provision. Improvement has been excellent. The school has tackled key issues from the previous inspection very well. GCSE standards have risen from well-below national average to well above; the curriculum has developed to serve pupils very effectively and create a very rich network of links with the local and international community; teaching has improved, with the proportion of very good teaching more than doubling, and provision for post-16 students has increased enormously.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Overall achievement in the main school is very good. Pupils make particularly rapid progress in Years 10 and 11, and reach standards that are well above average. 2003 GCSE results were above average, but those for 2004 were far higher and matched the well above average standards seen in lessons. Standards are rising at a much faster rate than nationally. Boys' performance, lower than that of girls in previous years, exceeded it in 2004 at GCSE. At the end of Year 9, standards seen during the inspection were above average. Results in English, mathematics and science tests were average in 2003 and are similar in the (unconfirmed) 2004 results. Tests in these three subjects indicate that pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9. In lessons, pupils make good progress. As the pupils gaining such strong GCSE results had below average attainment when they first entered the school, this indicates very good value-added or achievement. In English standards in Year 11 are above average, but in mathematics and science they are well above average. Achievement in the sixth form is sound. Students enter with lower standards than in most sixth forms; while results are below average, this represent satisfactory value-added. Current lessons, reflecting particularly effective teaching, typically have students making good progress.

Pupils' personal qualities are very effectively promoted, ensuring very good behaviour and attitudes and above-average attendance. **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good** and a majority of pupils show great maturity in their conduct.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning as well as the curriculum are all very effective.

Teaching and learning are very good across the school. There are instances of excellent teaching in several subjects. Teachers show exceptional specialist expertise and very good communication skills. They have very high expectations of pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11. Pupils learn very well with such teaching, but also bring very positive attitudes to their work. In the main school, assessment and target-setting are good by national standards but are rightly identified by the school as an area to improve. In the sixth form, they have been unsatisfactory but new and much better arrangements have just been introduced so a satisfactory position has been achieved. All groups of pupils are helped towards successful progress by a very imaginative and flexible curriculum. There is a far better match than usual between pupils' needs and the type of courses they follow. Some of this stems from the excellent links the school has with the wider community, which enables very effective work-related learning to take place. Pupils also benefit from very strong support from parents and the school's very effective care and guidance.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school benefits from **outstanding leadership** by the headteacher, who is very effectively supported by other senior staff. There is excellent vision, drive and energy and an infectious commitment to serving pupils' needs by constant improvement. Administrative matters are handled extremely efficiently and **management processes are very effective**, especially those involved in monitoring and supporting teaching. These factors have enabled standards and the quality and range of the schools' work to improve dramatically in recent years. Governors are highly effective, very knowledgeable about the school and contribute good strategic advice and support. Despite failing to meet a very limited number of statutory duties their overall impact is excellent.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents responding to the inspection questionnaire and attending the parents' meeting express very strongly supportive views of the school. Its popularity is confirmed by its being very heavily oversubscribed. Pupils are also highly supportive of the school, with well over 90 per cent believing it is a good school to be at. They are not tolerant of any poor behaviour or discrimination, but consider that the school deals very well with any such incidents.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Take all possible steps to ensure that sixth form students make good value-added in all their courses.
- Raise the effectiveness of sixth form management systems.
- Ensure that the best examples of target-setting and assessment in lessons are extended across the school to become standard practice.
- Raise the quality of provision in formal citizenship lessons and PHSE lessons to match the school's very good overall quality.
- Provide strong leadership in English to make sure pupils reach standards which match the school's norms in Years 7 to 11.
- Continue to take all possible steps to provide good quality accommodation for the sixth form and a range of subject teaching spaces itemised in the main report.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The **overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory.** Value-added, or achievement, is sound, and in several areas good. Standards are below average, but students enter Year 12 with

much lower prior attainment than in other sixth forms. Teaching and learning are very good. Current leadership is very good, but extremely new. Management systems are satisfactory. Given that spending per student is average, cost effectiveness is satisfactory. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The formal curriculum is very good and the range of enrichment activities is excellent.
- The newly appointed director of sixth form provides very good vision and planning.
- Students' attitudes are very positive.
- Links between sixth-form students and pupils in the main school and between students and the wider community are excellent.
- The collective value-added in sixth-form courses is no more than satisfactory.
- Standards at A2 level are below national averages.
- Management is satisfactory overall, but monitoring and tracking systems, including the use of assessment for learning, are unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements for religious education are not met.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in A2 English Literature is good . Standards are above average, reflecting very good teaching and learning. Achievement in lessons is currently very good. Provision in A2 French is satisfactory . Broadly satisfactory teaching leads to sound learning and achievement and standards are close to national averages.
Mathematics	Provision in A2 mathematics is good . Recent examination results and standards seen in lessons are average; this indicates good value-added and is the outcome of good teaching and learning.
Science	Provision in A2 physics is very good . Teaching and learning are very effective and students make very good progress in lessons. Provision in AVCE science is very good . The Year 12 students on the course are making very good progress because teaching and learning are very effective. Standards seen in lessons are above average.
Information and communication technology	Provision in the AVCE ICT is good . Standards are above average and student achieve well in lessons. Teaching and learning are very good.
Humanities	Provision in A2 geography is very good . Recent results were above average while current Year 13 standards are below average, largely because of differences in prior attainment. Teaching is very good and students achieve well in lessons. Provision in A2 history is good . Standards are average and teaching good. Students progress well in lessons.
Psychology	Provision in AS/2 psychology is satisfactory . Teaching and learning are good, standards are below average, but achievement is good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in A2 design and technology (product design) is very good . This is an exceptionally well led subject with well above average standards. Teaching is very good and students make very effective progress.

AVCE Engineering	Provision in AVCE engineering is very good . There is excellent leadership of this course with very good teaching and learning. Standards are well above average.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in the National Diploma in art and design is very good . Standards are well above average and students make very good progress. This reflects very effective teaching and learning and excellent leadership and management. Provision in A2 drama is good . Standards are broadly average and achievement in lessons good. Teaching quality is very good and students learn well in lessons.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in the CSLA is very good . Teaching and learning are very effective, students well motivated and although standards have been below average they indicate good achievement for the students involved.
General education	The sixth form programme already ensures that key skills are well promoted across the curriculum, with particularly good scope for developing ICT expertise. There are numerous opportunities to develop personal communication skills in lessons and through mentoring work with younger pupils. The additional programme of activities currently being established gives students excellent enrichment.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school provides good advice, guidance and support for students. Their teachers and tutors are very effective in offering career or subject advice as well as personal support. The school brings students into contact with higher education and the world of work through visits and business and community leaders offering their specialist skills, for instance in giving students mock interviews. The tutorial system and progress tracking lack consistency: all other aspects of support are very impressive.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has new and very good leadership, benefiting from the vision of the school's senior leadership, who have ensured that rapidly increasing numbers of students now opt for post-16 courses. Effective leadership and management in the past have established a very wide curriculum and very close match between students' needs and suitable courses. This has established high completion rates and very positive attitudes. The newly appointed director of sixth form provides very good leadership: her initial impact and her development plans rightly focus on assessment and target-setting to increase value-added for students. Management systems are satisfactory, but monitoring and support of tutors and the tracking of student progress are less well established than in the main school.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

One hundred per cent of students replying to the inspection questionnaire like being in this sixth form and consider they are well taught and guided. Those interviewed confirmed this exceptionally positive overall view. They also thought that facilities are already too limited and will become more inadequate with expanding numbers; the lack of opportunity to meet regularly as a full sixth form with their director and tutors hinders communication; the tutorial system has good features but operates inconsistently. Inspectors agree with them on all these points.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils achieve very well in this school and by the end of Year 11 standards are well above average. Standards in the sixth form are lower, but achievement is broadly satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good overall progress between Years 7 and 11 and several subjects make a particularly strong contribution to such progress.
- GCSE/GNVQ results have improved greatly and are now well above the national average.
- Improvement in Year 9 tests and GCSE/GNVQ is at a far greater rate than nationally.
- Boys' performance at GCSE is now better than that of girls.
- Recent results in GCSE English and music are average when in most subjects they are much higher.
- Overall achievement in the sixth form is no more than satisfactory, though in some sixth-form subjects, students reach well above average standards and achieve very well.
- Achievement across Years 7 to 11 in citizenship is poor.

Commentary

1. Pupils achieve very well in this school because teaching is very effective and the school has created a very positive atmosphere for learning. The table below shows above average standards at the end of Year 11, especially in terms of high grade passes, but the 2004 GCSE/GNVQ results indicate even higher attainment, with A* to C passes at 75 per cent. Since these pupils entered the school with below-average standards, such results demonstrated very effective value-added. Pupils progress well in Years 7 to 9 and continue to achieve at a quickening pace in Years 10 and 11. Staff provide very imaginative and challenging teaching across most subjects and most years, but they are particularly adept at interpreting to pupils the basis for high attainment in GCSE courses.

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	66 (59)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	86 (84)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.6 (34.3)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 224 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Results in several subjects contribute particularly well to overall performance. In 2003, in history and art and design, for instance, the proportion of A* to C passes was over 80 per cent when nationally it is closer to 60 per cent. Even more significant, however, is the value-added across Years 7 to 11, which is very good in mathematics, ICT, art and design, history, science and design and technology. Value-added matches quite closely a combination in these subjects of very effective leadership and especially strong teaching.

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

	School results	National results
English	33.6 (32.9)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	35.9 (36.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.2 (35.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 254 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Since the previous inspection, Year 9 test results in English, mathematics and science have improved considerably and at a faster rate than nationally. This is partly evident in the table above, and confirmed by 2004 data. GCSE/GNVQ results have also outstripped national improvement trends, dramatically so in the last three years. This is because recent school improvement planning has given pride of place to creating a highly motivated and skilled teaching force, while also establishing a very positive climate in which pupils are valued and expected to give of their best. The leadership of the current headteacher has promoted these aims so successfully that they have been welcomed and adopted by staff and by the overwhelming majority of pupils and parents. As a result, staff are now far better trained and supported in their teaching and they work with pupils whose attitudes and behaviour overall have improved from barely satisfactory in 1999 to very good and often excellent in 2004.
4. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. They make very good gains in their reading ages, making up to 18 months progress in only six months. They do much better than might be expected in their GCSE examinations, often passing in seven subjects, and sometimes gaining the higher grades at A* to C. They also gain very creditable results in the Youth Awards, at both Bronze and Silver levels. Pupils based in the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Unit also benefit from very good support: their individual educational plans are very well written and provide very clear targets for the academic and social development of individuals. They are well used by teachers throughout the school. These are regularly reviewed and modified and pupils make very good progress against them.
5. While boys' attainment is lower than that of girls' at the end of Year 9, the gap between boys' and girls' performance at GCSE narrowed in 2003 and the 2004 results indicate boys are attaining higher than girls. This is very unusual nationally. Boys are well motivated in lessons and there are many aspects of the curriculum and teaching styles which help them do well: for instance, ICT is very heavily used in learning and teachers structure lessons into short sections more consistently than in other schools. In addition, the varied routes through Years 7 to 11 such features as fast-track courses, extensive work-related learning, vocational GCSEs and other features allows better matching of pupils' needs to provision by the school. Disenchanted boys are far fewer than usual as a result. Both boys and girls benefit from very effective special needs provision evaluated above, but because more boys have such needs, their gender results in examinations are enhanced more.
6. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very well overall. In mathematics, increasing numbers are entered successfully for the AS examination in Year 11. In art and music, pupils are entered early for GCSE and obtain very good results. In history, on the other hand, there have been no A* grades gained in recent years, although the percentage of pupils gaining grades A to C is very high.
7. Some elements of attainment and achievement are not quite as strong as in the school as a whole. Recent results in GCSE English and music and the current standards seen in geography are average when in most subjects they are much higher. Achievement across Years 7 to 11 in formally taught citizenship is poor. Literacy skills are satisfactory when the other key skills are very strong. Gifted and talented pupils do not gain as many A* grades at GCSE as in similar schools. The school is aware of these issues and has taken action on all of them. A good, recent appointment to lead geography has already produced good achievement in current lessons. The gifted and talented programme is now in place and well

coordinated. Appointments and restructuring in English meet the need for better assessment and target-setting, and literacy coordination is now strong. Citizenship lacks adequate time for the subjects to be effectively taught and new curricular arrangements are being proposed.

Sixth form

Standards are, on balance, average. Recent collective results are below national averages at A2 and on intermediate GNVQ courses, as indicated by students' points scores below:

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	89.6 (94.2)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	34.2 (24.7)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	225.8 (191.0)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. However, standards seen in lessons are now average and indicate a gradual rise in performance. Overall achievement or value-added in recent examinations has been unsatisfactory, but again, there is now better progress in lessons: currently achievement is satisfactory. This partly reflects the very good teaching and learning which prevail in the sixth form, with more attention than previously being given to target-setting and the use of assessment to shape lessons. Such features are less evident in students' work from last year, but the school has put considerable effort into improving this and other dimensions to sixth-form teaching and the strategies have been successful. Overall these levels of value-added remain modest compared to those being obtained for pupils in the main school.
9. Gifted and talented students achieve well overall and very well in some subjects. One or two students have obtained very high grades at A2 level and obtained places at Cambridge University in recent years. In art, students benefit from a particularly exciting course, including challenging life drawing, and produce work of very high quality. In design and technology, work in textiles is good enough to be worthy of display at the National Technology Education Show at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.
10. Standards and value-added or achievement vary between subjects. Amongst those given a focus during the inspection, current standards are well above average in art and in product design at A2, and the 2003 results in English literature reached equally impressive levels. In the subjects sampled briefly, standards are also well above average in dance and music. Very good value-added is typical of lessons in focus subjects such as design and technology, art and English literature, and equally strong progress was seen during the sampling of business studies, dance and music. Achievement elsewhere is no more than satisfactory, for instance, in French and the level 2 course in ICT.
11. The procedures for long-term monitoring of students' progress remain inconsistent: they lack a coherent sixth-form dimension that draws and acts upon the data used to guide subject leaders. Tracking students' progress in pursuit of challenging targets is done very well in some subjects, art and business studies, for example, and this coincides with established patterns of strong achievement. At present, there is no clear system for enabling the director of sixth form to spread such practice and enforce consistently high quality.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' overall personal development is very good which results in pupils having very good attitudes to school and to their learning. Behaviour around school and in lessons is also very good. Attendance is good and pupils arrive on time.

Attitudes and behaviour of students in the sixth form are very good and their attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' social and moral development is very good because of the school's clear communication of its values, beliefs and high expectations of attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils enjoy being at school and tackle lessons and activities with interest and enthusiasm.
- Students enjoy sixth-form life very much and apply themselves to their studies very well.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent, creating a happy and productive atmosphere in which pupils and students learn well and are confident and relaxed.
- Pupils and sixth-form students take on responsibility extremely well and make a good contribution to the daily life of school.

Commentary

12. The importance of pupils' personal development is central to the work of the school, which has successfully created a supportive and caring atmosphere in which pupils grow and flourish. Through its well-established ethos and climate of honesty, trust and respect, the school has a strong sense of community in which all pupils play an equal and important role. Pupils are valued for their contribution to school life and there is a feeling of harmony throughout. These broad features of school life help them acquire many of the characteristics of good citizens, even though formal citizenship provision has limitations.
13. Moral development is very good. Pupils acknowledge and understand the moral code on which their school life is based. High expectations are clear. Assemblies, many tutor periods and the teaching styles in lessons reinforce the values of right and wrong and respect for others and the behaviour of most pupils is very good. They are polite, friendly, interested and quick to talk to visitors. The number of permanent exclusions is low and fixed-term exclusions are used appropriately to deal with unacceptable behaviour.
14. Social development is also very good because the school's expectations are clear, consistent and supportive. Most lessons provide opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups for discussion and collaborative work. Pupils listen, cooperate and work independently very well and are involved fully in their own learning. Many take part in the excellent range of extra-curricular clubs and activities that often take them far afield, including Kenya and Thailand. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school. Relationships between pupils and staff and between pupils themselves are excellent and contribute enormously to pupils' confidence, self-belief and willingness to learn.
15. Pupils' spiritual development is good. The school deliberately and successfully promotes a strong sense of identity and self-worth that enables pupils to value themselves and others. This contributes positively to their ability to learn and their good achievement. In religious education lessons, pupils learn about the diversity of religion and show respect for the beliefs of others. Pupils' cultural development is also good. Through the performing arts many pupils take part in music, drama and dance and experience the joy and creativity of being involved in artistic ventures. The close involvement and friendship with a village in Kenya is giving pupils first-hand understanding and awareness of a culture very different from their own.
16. Pupils are offered many opportunities to take on responsibilities and they respond extremely well. For example, the peer mentors and mediators are dedicated, responsive and mature and spend much of their time helping others in a very effective and valuable way. Prefects in Year 11 make a genuine contribution to the running of the school.

17. Attendance in Years 7 to 11 has improved steadily since the previous inspection and is now good. This is as a result of the school's high expectations and active approach towards monitoring and promoting good attendance, supported well by parents. This improved attendance contributes directly to the good achievement pupils make. Despite the large site, pupils move between buildings quickly and lessons generally begin promptly.

Sixth form

18. Sixth-form students approach their studies with enthusiasm and interest. They work hard in lessons and independently to further their learning and understanding. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent and lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect. In many lessons, students debate keenly, are supportive of each other and can give critical advice that is helpful. Students joining the sixth form from other schools settle in quickly and soon feel part of the community. Students enjoy the sixth form life and the greater independence it offers them. The sixth-form committee and 'ambassadors' (sixth formers who represent the school) do much to help with the day-to-day routines and many students work as peer mentors with younger pupils in lessons and tutor times. Attendance and punctuality of students in lessons are good, but attendance at tutorial times is very variable due to the home study policy, which means that some miss useful time with their tutors and the valuable advice they provide.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (94.6%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.3	School data	0.1
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Chinese
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1540	97	3
10	0	0
4	0	0
3	0	0
5	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
12	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning overall is very good. This is true across all year groups, but is particularly clear in Years 10 and 11, where teachers' use of assessment is best.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good and show greater consistency than in other schools.
- There is a significant minority of excellent teaching and learning.
- Teachers show exceptional skills in encouraging and motivating pupils, and set expectations at the highest possible levels.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning.
- Specialist expertise is excellent in the sixth form and very good in the main school.
- Assessment is very well used in GCSE/GNVQ classes. It is strong but capable of improvement in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form.
- Independent study both in lessons and at home is better than generally found, but not as effective as most other features of teaching and learning in this school.

Commentary

19. Teaching is a strength of the school. It is very good overall, with nearly 80 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection being good, very good or excellent. This represents good improvement on an already strong feature at the time of the last inspection. All subjects have lessons with good or very good teaching as the norm and it is very rare for any unsatisfactory teaching to occur. Teaching and learning are well structured and well paced; tasks for pupils are suitably varied and interesting, frequently using ICT effectively; relationships are very good and objectives are generally very clear. These and other features are developed and reinforced by a remarkably extensive programme of training and professional development within the school, which represent an impressive commitment to continuous improvement by teachers.
20. The school has appointed, or promoted from within its ranks, more Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) than usual. They directly contribute to the excellent teaching and learning found in some 10 per cent of lessons and the extensive very good practice. Along with several other members of staff, they regularly demonstrate how to combine all the elements of successful teaching so that pupils are inspired by the exciting work they cover and by their teachers' infectious enthusiasm and commitment to high standards. ASTs are also at the heart of the school's ongoing training programme so that their impact is evident in the overall quality and consistency of teaching.
21. Teachers have many strengths, but they are outstanding as a group in the way they encourage and motivate pupils. They demonstrate an extremely positive view of their pupils; they are particularly consistent in showing respect and expecting it in return. Pupils indicate that staff, including senior managers, know them surprisingly well and show a genuine interest in them as people. This is confirmed by inspectors' observations. In addition, these attitudes are promoted by very skilful strategies: lesson design is a great strength, with variety and interest, attainable yet demanding goals, good pace, impressive preparation and flexibility are all evident. Teachers also show perception in the positive way they talk to pupils, address them by name, praise their work, encourage pupils to respect each other and admire success. While all pupils' learning benefits from these features, they help ensure boys remain more involved and highly motivated than is common nationally.
22. The expectations set by teachers are very high indeed. They are consistently demanding in the general pitch of lessons, identifying from the outset that demanding tasks will be set and that the amount of work to be covered will be substantial. Pupils are also fully aware that only

their best behaviour will be acceptable: this is reinforced in lessons by very frequently verbally rewarding good behaviour. Unacceptable behaviour is identified and commented upon firmly but pleasantly as soon as it occurs.

23. Teachers across the school demonstrate a high level of subject expertise and they communicate very skilfully. These features are crucial to high-quality lessons: they flourish on the great credibility of the teachers and the respect and confidence this engenders. Rapid progress in pupils' understanding is achieved because of the clarity of exposition from staff. Pupils have so improved in their behaviour and attitudes since the last inspection that the vast majority now go to lessons prepared to work hard, listen well and participate fully. This consensus amongst pupils - that they are in school to learn - gives a major boost to progress across all year groups.
24. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is very good. In the best lessons, methods are very active; there is a very brisk pace, and excellent relationships between pupils and staff. As a result, pupils try very hard to succeed, and are absorbed in the lesson. This produces very good learning. Individual educational programmes are very well written, and give staff a very clear idea of each individual pupil's strengths and targets, which helps teachers to set work at the correct level. Teaching assistants know pupils well and give effective support, which helps to keep them concentrating in their lessons. This is also true for the quality of teaching and learning for pupils with ASD. Staff are very knowledgeable about ASD and employ a very good range of strategies to ensure that their pupils make the very good progress evident in their academic and social development. They are very good at integrating students into the mainstream provision and preparing them for the challenges they will face when their time at school finishes. They are skilled at choosing when and when not to intervene in order to promote students' independence.
25. The teaching of gifted and talented pupils is very good. Teachers are aware of which pupils are identified by their departments and most ensure that they are provided with challenging work. In design and technology, teachers are especially skilled at identifying opportunities for students to develop their skills.
26. When teaching is supported by effective use of assessment data, the overall quality is particularly effective and sometimes excellent. Pupils' prior attainment is built on most effectively in these lessons; challenge for the most capable and least confident pupils is evident; and rapid progress is made by all. While this is apparent in lessons across the year groups, it is best developed in Years 10 and 11. It is common in GCSE science, art, drama, ICT, and geography lessons. Pupils are very well informed about their strengths and weaknesses, their current standards and the targets to which they should aspire, and they find their teachers very adept at showing how they can improve. This leads to excellent motivation and sense of purpose in the pupil's learning. Their progress is helped by regular dialogue with their teachers. The same lessons usually see pupils working actively in pairs or groups as well as in the class as a whole, so that they have opportunity to evaluate their own learning and their progress is constantly checked and reinforced by astute monitoring by the teacher. Use of assessment data by teachers and pupils is not as highly developed in Years 7 to 9 and the sixth form, but the school's improvement plan has already identified scope for spreading best practice and has begun the process.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 216 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
24 (11.0%)	84 (39.0%)	63 (29.0%)	41 (19.0%)	3 (1.4%)	1 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)

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

Sixth form

27. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. All lessons seen during the inspection had at least satisfactory teaching and learning and in 80 per cent the quality of both was at least good. About 10 per cent had excellent teaching. Common to most lessons is an extremely high level of subject expertise and authoritative explanation and questioning by teachers. Their ability to encourage and involve students is excellent. The students and their work indicate that active involvement has increased over the last year, which matches a period of coaching on teaching styles provided by the school. In some subjects, there is now extensive independent work or group work by students, but these are satisfactory or good features when most other aspects of teaching are very good or excellent. Similarly, the use of assessment to guide teachers and students in lessons is an improving area. It is good overall, but varies between teachers or departments, with very good practice in subjects such as science, business studies, and geography and those where it is no more than satisfactory, such as French.
28. The teaching of gifted and talented students in the sixth form is good. Departments identify and teachers know who they are. In the majority of subjects, such as psychology, design and technology, art and mathematics, the teachers maintain a high level of expectation so that students are challenged with more difficult work and tasks. In English, individual support for coursework and good one-to-one advice provides well for the highest attainers. There is not enough challenge provided in ICT.

The curriculum

The school has a very good curriculum, the outcome of excellent innovation. The opportunities pupils have for enrichment beyond the taught curriculum are outstanding. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall planning and monitoring of the curriculum is very effective.
- The curriculum meets most of the needs and interests of pupils very well.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The range of activities available to enrich pupils' experience is outstanding.
- Provision for National Curriculum citizenship and for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in parts of the school.
- The school fails to offer religious education in the sixth form or provide the opportunity for a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

29. The careful planning and provision of a curriculum to meet the various needs and aptitudes of all its pupils is at the heart of the school's programme for improvement. Direct involvement in national initiatives has enabled the school to define and create pathways for pupils that are highly innovative and flexible. Provision for work-related learning and preparation for later stages of education and for employment are excellent. Retention rates on vocational courses are very high. As befits a school with Specialist Technology status, the curriculum in design and technology is excellent. The sharply rising trend in levels of participation and attainment is the direct result of the improved curriculum.
30. Provision for National Curriculum citizenship and the programme of personal, social and health education are unsatisfactory, however, mainly because the combined course lacks coherence and progression. Pupils learn well within the one lesson every two weeks and cover drugs awareness and sex education adequately, but the length of the gap between

lessons undermines continuity of learning. In all years, the school fails to meet the statutory requirement to provide the daily opportunity for acts of collective worship.

31. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 meets all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. As part of a national initiative, the school has begun to move towards a two-year programme in Key Stage 3 with the introduction of Key Stage 4 work at the beginning of Year 9. Careful planning ensures that pupils are ready to move onto more demanding work earlier than usual and this is having a beneficial impact on standards.
32. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have the benefit of a wide range of choices. In addition to the core subjects, there are also optional courses. The school provides a wide range of both academic and vocational courses that lead on to appropriate and relevant courses in the sixth form. The school's explicit recognition that pupils need different pathways to success ensures a range of provision based primarily on aptitude and interest.
33. The match of teachers to the curriculum is very good in most areas. Virtually all subjects have specialist teaching, which has a positive effect on standards. Numbers of teaching assistants and technical staff are sufficient to support teaching and learning very well. However, citizenship is taught by seven members of staff from other subjects, creating difficulties for coordination and consistency of approach.
34. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They are educated with their peers in mainstream classes for the great majority of the time. When modifications are made to their timetable or curriculum, they are very well matched to the needs of these pupils. For example, to improve literacy skills, small groups are often formed, and there is some one-to-one tuition. Sixth-form students also help pupils with their reading. The school uses outside agencies very well, and very efficient communication by e-mail keeps staff up to date on pupils' progress. In addition, the pupil support centre creates a very positive learning atmosphere where pupils work very well, especially those who are at risk of exclusion. Pupils from the ASD unit are very well integrated into the mainstream school and, with support, usually follow the normal curriculum. Study sessions in the ASD base after school support the curriculum very well. An excellent feature is the one-to-one meetings between teachers and pupils to review progress and to set targets. Very occasionally, the school admits pupils whose home language is not English. Such pupils are given appropriate support of high quality and achieve very well.
35. In addition, there are very good opportunities for pupils to develop socially as well as academically, in regular life-skills sessions, on camp, in opportunities to follow the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and in a number of educational visits to places such as Dorchester museum.
36. Very good curricular arrangements for gifted and talented pupils include early entry for GCSE in several subjects and the opportunity to take AS in mathematics and in music in Year 11. The science trip to Geneva enables pupils to visit the CERN project and see the particle generator. There are excellent links with primary schools involving master classes in English, mathematics, modern languages and science and enabling identification of talented sports and games players in Year 6 so that they can be involved in special programmes with Year 7 pupils.
37. The outstanding programme of extra-curricular opportunities is a major strength of the school. A huge variety of sports activities and team games is very well supported by pupils. Talented sports players have good opportunities to develop their skills, and there are good training links with local sports clubs. A wide range of activities in music, dance and drama attract large numbers of participating pupils and there are many opportunities to perform in public. There are frequent visits in the local area and an extensive variety of residential trips, including a Freshers' Camp on Dartmoor for all Year 7 pupils when they join the school.
38. Although assemblies and most tutorial periods offer valuable social and moral guidance they do not provide for a daily act of collective worship.

39. While many areas of the school have excellent accommodation, the expanding sixth form is already too large for some of its facilities. Teaching in modern foreign languages, science and music are also hindered to a degree by lack of soundproofing or specialist facilities.
40. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

Sixth form

41. The large size of the sixth form reflects and reinforces the school's success in providing a very wide range of courses to meet the needs of all students. Of the fifty courses available most are academic in the traditional sense, but more than ten are vocational. The school has a new director who has joined a dynamic and visionary team committed to further enlargement and even better results for all students. Close and systematic monitoring of rates of success in different courses together with an internal and external audit of provision has led to a convincing action plan for improvement.
42. A high-quality enrichment programme in the sixth form plays a major role in building students' leadership qualities. There is very good participation in the wide programme of outdoor activities and many notable examples of sporting success. Many train regularly to take part in the Ten Tors Walk, while students regularly visit Kenya to assist in the development of a rural community. Many students embark on expeditions to remote parts of the world organised by the Dorset Expeditionary Society, based at the college. These activities contribute strongly to students' personal, social and cultural development. Curricular arrangements for gifted and talented students are also very good and especially so in design and technology.
43. However, the school is in breach of the statutory requirement to provide religious education for students in the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides an excellent level of care for its pupils and students, which is acknowledged and appreciated by parents. Support for pupils' personal development is excellent and support for their learning is very good. Involvement of pupils and students in school life is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent support for personal development ensures everyone gets the best out of their time in school.
- Very good strategies support pupils' learning very well and contribute to the good achievement they make.
- Pupils are involved extremely well in school life and make a valuable impact on the work of the school.
- Many aspects of the physical care of pupils are excellent.
- Very good arrangements help new pupils and sixth-form students settle quickly.
- The use of tutorial time in the main school is inconsistent and often unproductive.

Commentary

44. The school is a very caring place where pupils feel safe and comfortable. The pastoral system is very effective and staff work together closely and have a very good understanding of pupils' individual circumstances and needs. Because of this, pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable and responsive. Throughout the school, the excellent relationships result in teachers and pupils interacting very well and there is a relaxed yet purposeful and stimulating atmosphere.
45. There are some very good strategies to support learning, which contribute directly to the good achievement made by most pupils. Good tracking and monitoring highlight those pupils who

need extra help and pupil mentors are often used as learning role models. The student support centre is used well to help some pupils learn to manage their own behaviour so that it does not disrupt their own and others' learning.

46. The school pays excellent attention to the physical care and well-being of its pupils and students. The school nurse provides excellent support, care and advice for staff and pupils and child protection procedures are handled very well. Excellent relationships with outside agencies result in a very high quality of care to help and support pupils, students and families. Much good practice regarding health and safety is evident in the school and departmental risk assessments are good.
47. Pupils make a huge contribution to the life of the school through the council, the peer mentors, peer mediators and prefects. Pupils' input is thoughtful, mature and helpful. They have a direct effect on the development of younger pupils through the peer mentoring and many of the mentors train other pupils and teachers in mentoring skills. Mediators help other pupils to resolve their conflicts and disagreements in practical and helpful ways and the college council is a genuine voice within the school that is appreciated by teachers. The head boy and girl and the chair of the sixth-form committee are members of the Welfare and Discipline committee.
48. Year 7 pupils settle in quickly and easily because of the very good arrangements to help them. They are well prepared during Year 6 and well supported throughout their first term. Very early in the autumn term, they go on a residential trip for a week. Many activities – energetic and quiet – are intended to help forge strong bonds with each other and with their teachers early in their secondary school life and pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy it.
49. Use of tutorial time as a means of support is very inconsistent. At its best, tutors and pupils work together very well to either extend learning or to jointly think about issues raised through the 'thought for the week'. However, on many occasions, it is used as a social time where pupils chat and nothing constructive is achieved.

Sixth form

50. Guidance for students prior to entering the sixth form is good and students feel confident that they have selected the right courses. There is a good and carefully thought-out tutorial programme that provides students with high-quality advice and support relating to studying, independent learning, choices after college and admission to further education. Unfortunately, the home-study policy means that students do not always have to be there for tutorial time and many regularly miss a valuable source of help, support and advice.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with the community are excellent and make a strong contribution to pupils' and students' learning experiences. The school seeks and values parents' support and has a very good partnership with them. Links with other schools are very good and there is a genuine professional dialogue, which is improving the quality of learning for pupils and students in nearby schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent involvement of local business, industry and expertise support and enrich the curriculum very well.
- Excellent involvement of expertise within the governing body contributes strongly to the improvement and development of the school.

- There are very good links with parents and the shared vision is clearly communicated to parents and fully supported.
- Very good links with primary schools are helping to raise standards in primary schools and give older and younger pupils the chance to work together.

Commentary

51. The school has an excellent partnership with its local community. The governing body consists of a cross-section of backgrounds and brings specialist expertise to the running and development of the school. Local businesses and industries play an important part in broadening the experiences of pupils through innovative and extremely well-managed projects that extend and enrich the curriculum and put learning in the context of the world of work. Such impressive links play a large part in preparing pupils for life after school.
52. The school seeks and enjoys the support of its parents and is constantly looking at ways in which to involve them more. The excellent newspaper and very good quality brochures, leaflets and web site keep parents up-to-date with activities, events and developments. Their views are sought on topical issues through questionnaires and the monthly parents forum where parents can air their views and ask questions. In this way, parents gain a clear understanding of the philosophy, beliefs and day-to-day aspects of school life.
53. Communication between home and school is very good and parents are comfortable in approaching teachers with questions or problems. This applies to parents of the full range of pupils. Teachers are quick to contact parents personally to explain problems and how they intend to deal with them. E-mail is often used to keep in touch with parents, who will soon have electronic access to their children's progress records. Parents are very supportive and very happy with the experience they and their children have.
54. The school has developed very good relationships with other schools in the area to the benefit of pupils, students and teachers. The college is very aware of its strengths and actively works towards improving education locally through sharing professional learning. Particularly in mathematics, science, design and technology, physical education and ICT, many pupils and teachers in primary schools benefit from specialist teaching, knowledge and resources in a variety of ways. Many of the primary schools are reporting higher standards as a result. The school is a driving force in the Chesil Education Partnership, which is doing much to promote a cohesive approach to education in the area. The Dorset Expeditionary Society, created and established at the school, provides support, suggestions, advice and guidance for outdoor education for schools locally and nationally.

Sixth form

55. Excellent business and industry links play an important part in many sixth-form courses and activities. For example, Year 12 health and social care students work with Poole Hospital Trust and West Dorset General Hospital. AVCE science students have good links with police forensics and Weymouth Sealife Park. All sixth formers attended The Next Step conference, which involved many businesses and gave students a good insight into career opportunities. Community sports leader awards, Young Enterprise, Ten Tors challenge and expeditions to Thailand and Kenya provide many opportunities for students to work and live with people from many backgrounds and countries.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership; management arrangements for the school as a whole are very good. Governance is excellent. Improvement overall has been good, especially in management and governance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership.
- Senior leaders and leaders of years and of many subject areas are very effective.
- Aspects of management, especially staff development and financial management, are excellent.
- The school has been transformed by the impact of improvement since the last inspection.
- Leadership and management in design and technology are excellent.
- Management procedures in the sixth form are satisfactory, whereas the quality of management in the school as a whole is much higher.
- The quality of leadership in a few subjects, while satisfactory, is not as high as the school's general standard.

Commentary

56. The headteacher's leadership of the school is excellent. He is ambitious for the school, and promotes it by an outstanding combination of personal qualities and foresight. He leads by example and encouragement and with an obvious care for individuals, whether staff or pupils. It is rare to find a headteacher with a better personal knowledge of all those who work and study under them. His strategic thinking and planning are equally outstanding. He has provided the clearest possible sense of direction for the school and set about realising its challenging aims by imaginative yet well-grounded strategies. This has led the school to become highly successful in expanding its curriculum, dramatically improving facilities, raising teaching quality and, as a result, transforming pupils' academic and personal development.
57. An ability to inspire others to share in his aims is evident in many forms. A particular success has been the creation of a range of very effective teams. At senior level, good judgement has been employed in appointing new internal and external candidates to join long-serving senior staff: they represent a particularly good mix of sound experience and innovative thinking and are all given very good scope for working independently, while jointly promoting the same vision and high levels of commitment to the school. For instance, the procedures for monitoring and supporting staff have been very well developed by one member of the team to a very high level, with the headteacher fully informed but released from any direct responsibility for the programme. Similarly the ASTs have been formed into a team so that, in addition to enriching their own curricular areas independently, they collectively provide high-quality training and coaching of colleagues across the school. This work has had a major beneficial impact on the overall quality of teaching and the very good relationships between staff and pupils. It is guided and monitored by another senior leader, with the headteacher's role essentially strategic. Year tutors work in very effective teams and most subjects have very good leadership and management in which consistency, mutual support and shared values are the norm. Fittingly for a school with Technology College status, leadership of the design and technology department is outstanding.
58. Management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Reviews are conducted very efficiently, reports on pupils' progress are very well written and reflect a very good knowledge and understanding of individual pupils. Development planning is very clear and detailed. Good progress has been made in promoting disability access, as required by regulations that came into force in 2002. However, problems remain in providing suitable access to some of the upper floors. Leadership is excellent. There is a very strong sense of purpose in the work of the department and a very clear vision. This has produced rapidly evolving, very high quality provision overall. Leadership of the ASD base is excellent. The head of base leads by example, providing an excellent role model for staff and pupils with his sympathetic and determined approach. The management of the base is very good.

59. The leadership and management of the provision for gifted and talented pupils are good. The recently appointed coordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. He has worked hard to make sure he is up to date through visits to schools where practice is excellent and through assiduous study. He is monitoring individual departments to ensure more even practice across the school as a whole.
60. Excellent financial and very effective curricular management aims are often combined in the school's work. An example is the "Leading Edge Training", a semi-autonomous organisation owned and housed by the school. It has evolved from the school's desire to meet many of its own in-service training needs from within its own ranks, into a group that offers the school high-quality training in, for instance, teaching skills and in management of pupils by mid-day assistants. It also provides training to commercial companies and government agencies and is able to promote the curriculum by making its top-of-the-range facilities available to school staff and students. In addition, it produces a significant flow of funds into the school's account. This enterprise illustrates the school's fine track record in seeking out additional funding to improve provision, as confirmed by the renewal of its Technology College status, its new Leading Edge status and the confident way it handles major projects. The recently opened design and technology block, for example, was funded by the sale of school land, was built on time and to budget and used in-house resources to fit out the suite. The unusually large balance brought forward into the 2003/4 financial year reflects the early acquisition of the funds to pay for this accommodation. First-rate facilities, provided at low cost and managed by the school, illustrate "best value" principles working at an exceptional level.
61. While leadership and management are sound in English they are not as strong as elsewhere. There is less of the strong sense of direction and the commitment to detailed plans for improvement seen in most other departments. The taught citizenship and personal and social education programmes have unsatisfactory management. While so much else that the school does contributes to citizenship and pupils' personal development, these formal courses have too little time allocated to them and are poorly coordinated. The shortcomings in leadership and management are known to senior leaders and are already being acted upon.
62. The governing body is highly effective. It shows an exceptional level of commitment to the school and is very effectively organised. Governors are far better informed than is common about the school's work, not only through reports and a well-managed meeting programme, but through direct involvement. Many visit the school during the day, go into classrooms and meet with staff, listening and offering support. The link-governor systems work very well with nearly all subjects having a governor who knows their particular area well and can offer specialist knowledge at governors' meetings. In addition, an extensive programme of presentations to governors by staff ensures an excellent level of knowledge about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are closely involved in strategic planning at every stage of policy formation. They fulfil the vast majority of their statutory duties extremely well, but have yet to meet the requirements for a daily act of worship and for religious education in the sixth form. They find that daily acts of worship cannot be sustained without compromising the personal integrity of staff. Sixth form provision is being revised along appropriate lines.
63. The leadership and management processes are very effective, teaching and learning are very strong and pupils make very good progress. Even though spending per pupil is above average, the value for money provided by the school is very good.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,217,217	Balance from previous year	899,875
Total expenditure	5,840,011	Balance carried forward to the next	277,081
Expenditure per pupil	3,700		

Sixth form

64. The sixth form is very well led by its newly appointed director. Management arrangements are satisfactory. The sixth form has had the benefit of good vision from senior leadership and previous heads of sixth form, who have enabled student numbers and the range of courses to expand enormously since the previous inspection. The new director's evaluation of current strengths and weaknesses in post-16 provision is very convincing and supported by well-marshalled evidence. Her improvement plans rightly focus on how assessment and target-setting can be used more effectively and consistently. The limited value-added shown by recent examination results is a related weakness that her plans also cover very thoroughly. Similarly, the problem of managing effectively is being dealt with: currently timetabling causes a range of problems - tutors do not see their students regularly enough and the director of sixth form cannot support or monitor staff and students as readily as she needs. Tracking of students' progress is less well established than in the main school, even though examples of excellent practice are found in several post-16 subjects. Most administrative and guidance issues are managed well.
65. Cost effectiveness is satisfactory. There are good completion rates for most courses and in the main viable groups sizes, though exceptions do exist. While teaching is now very good the confirmed value-added seen in examination results is only satisfactory. Leadership of subjects in the sixth form is very good overall, and the quality is exceptional in design and technology and art and design. It is no more than satisfactory in French.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision in work-related learning (WRL) is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from excellent links with a wide range of business organisations.
- An extensive range of enrichment activities helps pupils to develop a very good understanding of the workplace.
- Very good programmes of work experience and extended work experience enable pupils to take part in off-site learning.
- The school offers a wide range of certificated courses.
- Pupils' awareness of work-related learning is very well developed in the formal curriculum.

Commentary

66. A highly impressive range of links with business organisations contributes very effectively to pupils' understanding of the world of work. A very wide variety of contexts, including, among a very large number, a project in Kenya that entails the building of a school and health centre, work with the West Dorset District Council to evaluate transport needs on a local industrial estate, visits from representatives of local firms to conduct interviews, "Construction Challenge" events and presentations to pupils and sixth form students on business-related matters, successfully broadens the experience of pupils.

67. All pupils take part in two weeks of work experience and some pupils in Years 10 and 11 take part in extended work experience as part of the school's specialist pathways programme. This programme is very well led and managed. Pupils study for NVQ qualifications in brickwork, hair and beauty, childcare, woodwork and catering. They express very positive attitudes about their courses and are enthusiastic also in working towards key skills and preparation for employment qualifications. Very good teaching emphasises the development of skills relevant to the workplace. Teaching staff are very well trained and work alongside other schools through the Chesil Education Partnership. A half-termly evaluation includes self-assessment by pupils, who are very effectively encouraged further by the use of reward systems, progress charts and by the targets that teachers set for them. Resources are very good. Pupils have regular access to ICT facilities and a dedicated classroom. The monitoring of the programme by a member of the senior leadership team is very thorough and effectively promotes self-review by the department.
68. In addition, design and technology, art and design and ICT make excellent contributions to pupils' work-related learning. Professional designers from local companies visit the school and enlighten pupils on industrial and professional processes by providing help and materials. Among a large number of projects in design and technology, a local company made a presentation to AVCE engineering students that led to a project involving the making of a remote operated vehicle. A professional artist explained very clearly to engrossed pupils how the art market works. Teachers delivering the GNVQ ICT course further develop pupils' understanding and awareness by relating their work to the real business world.

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

- Teaching is very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well when supported.
- Assessment systems are not rigorous enough.

Commentary

69. Standards of attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were close to the national average. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment were significantly above this level, but fewer pupils than had been predicted attained higher levels. Results for 2004 have not yet been verified, but indications are that these are similar. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average. GCSE results in 2003 were close to the national average in English language, but below average in English literature. The performance of boys was close to the national average for boys, but that of girls was below the average for girls. Pupils performed less well in English than in other subjects. Results in 2004 improved significantly, with more pupils attaining the highest grades, A* to C although numbers gaining A* are still below what might be expected. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflected results obtained in 2004.
70. Achievement at the end of Year 9 is good. Pupils enter the school with average standards of attainment, and steadily improve their ability to respond to different types of literature. Particularly impressive is the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils, who are well supported by classroom assistants. Many improve their attainment to average levels, some as early as Year 8. The achievement of pupils who are gifted and talented is not readily identified in class work. However, creative work, such as that submitted for the National Poetry Competition, is impressive. Pupils speak fluently and perceptively, and readily understand what they read. For instance, most pupils are able to identify and discuss the implications of lines of dialogue in *Macbeth*; however, many average and lower attainers have difficulty in expressing their understanding in writing. Their drafting and re-drafting skills are weak, and their work is pervaded by technical errors. When, under guidance, a lower-attaining group discovered and corrected mistakes, the standard of their work was transformed.
71. Across Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress, particularly in critical responses to literature. Both lower and higher attainers were able to empathise with the predicament of different Shakespearean characters because they had discovered how to interpret the playwright's intention rather than becoming hindered by attempting to translate unfamiliar of speaking. They develop a good critical vocabulary, and structure their extended writing properly. Too many pupils fail to understand the importance of rigorous proofreading, with the result that the quality of their work is undermined by weak spelling and punctuation.
72. Teaching and learning are very good. During the inspection, a much greater proportion of very good and excellent teaching than is usually found was observed, especially in Years 10 and 11. The very best teaching is dynamic and well planned. Teachers instinctively incorporate a variety of approaches in response to the needs of individuals as they arise. The best lessons are inspirational, often resulting in a sense of exhilaration shared by both teacher

and pupils. The achievement of boys in particular improved in lessons based on a positive, energetic approach, incorporating a series of short-term tasks that provided a clear framework for extended written answers. Staff are conscientious and committed, constantly concerned with refining their professional craft to enable their pupils to develop their fullest potential. They are excellent role models. Very occasionally, slow pace, inappropriate use of time and insufficiently varied activities detract from the effectiveness of some lessons. In all but the best lessons, pupils are given insufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils' work is regularly marked, but departmental policies are not always consistently implemented.

73. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A prolonged period of instability in staffing had until recently undermined the central management of the department and its ability to respond to changing circumstances. Senior managers have worked with the head of department to create a collegiate approach, putting in place coordinators for each key stage. In cooperation with advanced skills teachers, a range of different teaching styles has been developed, and a policy of "fast-tracking" some classes towards early entry for national tests has been put in place. The effectiveness of these strategies was evident in the improving standards of attainment observed during the inspection. However, the assessment system has only recently been based on information about pupils' prior attainment, and has some way to go to become an effective means whereby attainment and achievement can be evaluated. Previously, inconsistent practice has led to discrepancies between teachers' assessments and results in national tests. Good habits of setting targets, tracking progress, and involving pupils in evaluating their work are at a very early stage of development. Currently, departmental managers are engaged in developing comprehensive schemes of work to take account of pupils' different abilities and learning styles. These initiatives are making an early impact, but have not yet had time to stabilise.
74. The department supports its pupils outside class time with a series of booster and revision classes. A summer school is organised each year, and there is a programme of visits to professional productions. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 regularly borrow books from the school library, but this habit falls to a very low level in Years 9, 10 and 11.
75. Since the previous inspection, the attainment by younger pupils, particularly their oral expression, has improved, although it continues to be undermined by poor technical accuracy. The performance of boys has improved. Teaching, never less than satisfactory then, has improved significantly, and is beginning to have a strong impact on pupils' attitudes towards their attainment. Courses in English language and English literature have been established in the sixth form. Improvement is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

76. Pupils' standards of attainment in literacy in other subjects of the curriculum are average. In most subjects, they acquire a relevant technical vocabulary, which they use accurately. Orally, pupils express themselves fluently; they are developing a good descriptive vocabulary. A particularly good example of this was observed in a physical education lesson in Year 11. However, inaccurate spelling and punctuation adversely affect the quality of their written work. There is no consistency in the way in which errors in pupils' work are marked, and improvement followed up. Younger pupils read widely and make good use of the facilities of the school library. However, statistical surveys carried out by the librarian indicate that very few pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 borrow library books.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to gain GCSE results that are well above average.
- Pupils overcome only average literacy skills to register very good achievement over Years 7 to 11.
- Boys achieve particularly well.
- There is inadequate dissemination within the faculty of the very good and excellent teaching that takes place.
- Very good leadership ensures a firm commitment to further improvement.
- Inadequacies in the accommodation sometimes impede pupils' learning.

Commentary

77. In 2003, GCSE results in both French and German were well above average. Provisional figures for 2004 indicate a continued improving trend in German, but results in French were not as high as in 2003.
78. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, though ideas on some of the very good practice are not shared within the department. Very effective teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to prepare themselves very well for examinations. Lessons have clear objectives. ICT is used regularly and is effective in helping pupils to work independently. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour. They have high expectations of what pupils can do. Good assessment procedures enable pupils to know what they need to do in order to improve. By making pupils think about language structures and patterns, they help develop pupils' literacy skills, and at the end of Year 11, the achievement of pupils is very good. Seating arrangements in lessons ensure the integration of boys and girls, and compared to the national picture boys achieve particularly well in both languages. The difference between the A* to C results of boys and girls is smaller than that which national figures show, and in German a higher proportion of boys than girls gains A* or A grades.
79. At the end of Year 9, pupils achieve well and reach standards that are above the national average. Higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of both spoken and written language. They use past, present and future tenses and have a good knowledge of vocabulary. Standards in speaking, as a result of good teaching that emphasises regular rehearsal, are high in controlled situations in the classroom. Teachers plan their lessons well and provide a variety of activities that enable pupils to develop all four language skills.
80. The faculty's programme of lesson observations is not sufficiently effective in enabling all teachers to benefit from the very good and excellent teaching that takes place. As a result, in a small minority of lessons, teachers do not match activities well enough to meet the needs of their pupils.
81. The good management of the subject that has led to major improvements in standards in both French and German is being maintained under a new subject leader, who has a clear vision of the future direction of the faculty. He leads by example and has a very strong commitment to raising standards further.
82. The subject is well resourced, but occasional, intrusive noise from adjacent areas of the building interferes with opportunities for pupils to take part in listening activities.
83. Improvement since the last inspection is very good, as reflected in higher standards and more effective teaching.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examinations results are well above the national average, showing a rate of improvement that is also much faster than the national one.
- Pupils learn very well because of very good teaching and because of their very good behaviour and attitudes.
- Very good curricular arrangements for the gifted and talented enable them to make especially good progress.
- Because the department is very well led and managed there has been very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Assessment procedures are not fully developed.

Commentary

84. Pupils' results in 2004 were well above average both in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE at Year 11. Year 9 results have shown an upward trend, higher than that seen nationally over recent years. GCSE results, too, have improved much faster than those seen nationally. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys compared with that of girls. Given that the pupils come to the school with average mathematical skills, these results represent very good achievement.
85. Work seen during the inspection was also well above average and shows very good achievement over time. In Year 9, one pupil in five is entered for GCSE two years early. Judging by their current standards, all of these pupils are on course to gain at least a C grade and most A or A* grades at the end of this academic year. Numerical and algebraic work is strong. All can multiply brackets; most can manipulate expressions and formulae including those containing indices. Even those who find mathematics difficult can gather and simplify like terms and solve straightforward equations.
86. In Years 10 and 11, the highest-attaining pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, study for A level in pure mathematics and statistics, mechanics or decision mathematics, dependent on the specialisms of teachers available. They can solve geometrical and trigonometric problems using Pythagoras' theorem or sine, cosine and tangent. They can find the roots of quadratic equations by using the formula. All of those seen were working at the level required to ensure an A2 pass at grade or above at the end of their course.
87. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the main school. In over half of the lessons the quality of both was very good or excellent. Although in one lesson observed learning and teaching were poor because of poor planning, all others were satisfactory or better. The teachers are very well qualified and know their subject very well. Lessons are thoroughly prepared and delivered at a good pace so that the pupils' interest is maintained and they work productively throughout, individually or in groups. Standards of behaviour are very high because the teachers insist that they remain so. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and make a significant contribution to the quality of learning. Almost all lessons are effective and efficient. Some are exciting, with very good use made of the interactive whiteboards, which are beginning to have a marked and very positive impact on the department's work.
88. Teaching and learning have been improved substantially since the last inspection because of very good departmental leadership and management and through the impact of the work of the department's advanced skills teacher. Teachers new to the school benefit from very good training and induction procedures. Teachers are observed teaching and these observations

lead to targets for improvement that are effective in helping to raise standards. Both the current and the previous heads of department are very good teachers, providing a very good and enthusiastic role model for both staff and pupils. Hence improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

89. Assessment of the pupils' work is good but, as yet, does not involve the pupils themselves sufficiently in the process. Much of the marking is constructive and humorous providing positive encouragement with good use made of stickers and rubber stamps to say "Well done" or "Oops!" Relatively little reference is made, however, to National Curriculum or GCSE standards and pupils do not contribute enough to shaping their own targets. The department knows this and has it as an issue to be addressed in their plans for further development.

Mathematics across the curriculum

90. Pupils demonstrate mathematical and numerical skills that are well above the national norm across the range of subjects they study. In ICT, pupils can understand the formulae they need to use in spreadsheets. In geography, they read and interpret graphs and diagrams to understand climate change. Very good numerical skills are demonstrated in physical education when calculating health-related statistics, such as heart rate and recovery rates.
91. The contribution to improving numerical understanding made in subjects across the curriculum varies. In food technology, it is very well done. Here a teacher who is also a qualified chef teaches ratio and proportion very effectively in the context of recipes for large and small quantities of food. In art and design, work is done on estimation of size and proportion related to patterns and tessellation. Overall, the contribution made is satisfactory and improving as the teacher newly appointed to coordinate numeracy works with each department in turn.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are above the national average and pupils are achieving well.
- By the end of Year 11, standards are well above the national average and achievement is very good.
- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The curriculum is unusually varied and meets the learning needs of pupils very well.
- Deficiencies in the accommodation limit the learning opportunities for many pupils.
- There is insufficient ICT equipment.

Commentary

92. Results in the tests taken at the end of Year 9 matched the national averages in 2003. In 2004, results were better and above the national figures. The rise in standards from Years 7 to 9 represents good achievement that is shared by all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Contrary to the national picture, boys perform better than girls. Over recent years, there has been a steady improvement in standards. Attainment by the present pupils is at least as good as the latest test results. There are indications that the accelerated programme, where some pupils will start their GCSE work early, will result in higher attainment. For example, pupils who are just into Year 8 already have a secure grasp of the science of reproduction.
93. Over recent years, there has been a steady improvement in GCSE results. A marked improvement in 2004 produced standards that are well above the national averages. This level of attainment shows very good achievement by all pupils. The difference in performance

by boys and girls is less than that seen nationally. All the evidence gathered during the inspection confirmed the maintenance of these high standards.

94. Very good teaching is characterised by imaginative and adventurous planning that results in lessons that are stimulating and which promote active learning and independence. Pupils relish this approach, enjoy science and learn very effectively. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent, pupils respond to teachers' evident care with respect and by consistently giving of their best. Teachers are able to set very ambitious targets for lessons, confident that pupils will rise to the challenge and persevere with difficult work. As pupils succeed, their own aspirations are raised. Learning opportunities are enriched by frequent practical work, using materials of the highest standards provided by the excellent technicians. All these features were evident in a lesson for lower-attaining pupils in Year 11, studying the properties of light. In the space of one lesson, pupils themselves demonstrated reflection, refraction, total internal reflection and the production of spectra. Throughout, their competence was impressive and their fascination as the effects unfolded was evident.
95. The recent change in leadership of the department has been a seamless transition. Improvement in the provision and development of new initiatives are continuing without interruption. All 14 teachers and the four well-qualified technicians form a mutually supportive team sharing a determination to improve the quality of provision. Management systems are all very good. For example, assessment of pupils' progress and the use of data to monitor teaching are excellent. Pupils are given ambitious targets, kept regularly informed about their achievement and know what they need to do to improve.
96. Recent extensions to the curriculum have improved the learning opportunities for many pupils. The acceleration programmed in Years 8 and 9 meets the needs of very high-attaining pupils very well. The variety of GCSE courses offered is much wider than usual and enables teachers to maximise the learning strengths and interest of all pupils. The introduction of applied science is proving very successful and is being carefully tailored to lead naturally to an equivalent course in the sixth form.
97. Two of the laboratories are in urgent need of renovation and others lack a full provision of services (gas, water and electricity). This limits the range of learning opportunities that can be offered without arranging room changes and will compromise the extension of post-16 courses. Ingenious methods, for example, the purchase of a mobile fume cupboard, and much additional work by technicians, are currently limiting the effects of these deficiencies on standards.
98. The department has first class expertise in the use of ICT. However, access to only one interactive white board and no dedicated data projectors is seriously limiting the use of this exciting technology to extend learning. Despite having a good stock of electronic sensors for temperature and pH etc, lack of enough computers means that pupils have few opportunities to use ICT to support their learning.
99. Since the last inspection, there has been very good improvement and the potential for further gains is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above national averages.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The tracking of progress of individuals is excellent in Years 9, 10 and 11.
- The GNVQ course for Year 9 students offers very good challenge.
- Learning resources are good.

Commentary

100. Students' attainment on entry is around national expectations. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments give levels well above the national average. The standards of work seen during the inspection were well above national norms. Students in Year 9 demonstrate well above average skills in their GNVQ course. They produce business documentation that is of a very high standard. They annotate their work very well, showing very good critical awareness of what they create. Most show high levels of independence in their work. Achievement by Year 9 is very good.
101. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 are well above the national average, both in examination results and in work seen. Achievement by Year 11 is very good for those pupils who opt for the GNVQ course. They have a very good understanding of the impact of ICT on the world about them. They provide very good commentaries for example on how ICT has transformed stock control in supermarkets or procedures in call centres. They have a very good knowledge of the legislation that governs the use of personal data in this country.
102. Overall teaching is very good. Teachers teach well to the examination courses offered by the department. Planning is very good and most lessons have very good structure that gives clear direction to learning. An excellent feature of the department is the tracking of progress of individual students. The information gained is used to set realistic targets for students to work towards. This has helped to improve results significantly. Teachers provide very good feedback both in their marking and as they move around the classrooms while students work on their computers.
103. Pupils show very good attitudes to learning. The presentation and organisation of their portfolios is overall of a very high standard. They are keen to improve their work.
104. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has transformed the department and has been instrumental in improving standards. She has led by example, providing very clear direction.
105. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been raised and a good range of courses has been successfully introduced. Technical support is good and contributes greatly to the smooth running of the department.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

106. Cross-curricular ICT is very good. A number of departments use ICT very well. Design and technology has particular expertise in computer-aided drawing and manufacturing. Art and design makes excellent use of image manipulation and animation software in all years. There is excellent practice in physical education and very good use in geography. An exception is science, where lack of equipment limits pupils' opportunities to use ICT. The school has recently appointed a teacher to manage cross-curricular ICT and he has already begun the process of auditing current provision. The school recognises the need for a whole-school scheme of work to provide a framework for further development.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the GCSE examination are well above average.
- Teachers ensure pupils are actively involved in their lessons.
- Good attitudes enable pupils to become partners in their learning.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is conveyed to their pupils.
- Marking does not support the development of literacy skills.
- Assessment does not inform pupils about the level of their attainment.
- The department has a clear commitment to raising standards.

Commentary

107. The standard of work at the end of Year 9 is average. Pupils achieve well because they are actively involved in their lessons. Pupils have a confident overview of conditions in 19th century England and the contrast between the rich and the poor. They recognise the period of industrial growth and identify the main factors contributing to it. Higher-attaining pupils consider the links between these factors, and their significance, whilst most simply note them. Their oral work is good and they are more confident when providing spoken explanations than when giving written responses. Their oral re-call of information is good. Written explanations tend to be more limited however, and lack organisation and reflection on the key points. They use sources confidently when required. When they have the opportunity, higher-attaining pupils research confidently into an area of change and make simple deductions about its cause.
108. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average and achievement is good. GCSE results over the last three years have been consistently well above average. Pupils have a clear understanding of the features of the periods studied and can suggest reasons for change. They have a good opportunity to develop their understanding of their own locality through their coursework. In their written work, higher-attaining students demonstrate reasoning and organisation of evidence. Lower attainers pupils include relevant information, but organisation is less secure, and repetitious. Pupils respond to GCSE questions well, although their responses are at times too long and lacking evidence. Written work is not carefully presented and the spelling and punctuation of some pupils is weak. Teachers are not consistent in their support for the development of literacy skills.
109. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. At its best, it is excellent. Teachers are concerned to involve students actively in their learning and these methods enable pupils to develop understanding and support their recall of information used. The enthusiasm of teachers for their subject is conveyed to the pupils. Pupils work well together and support each other's studies. Topics are selected that are likely to interest them and the teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to add colour and clear explanations. Achievement is reduced when the teacher's exposition becomes too long and pupils' role is to respond briefly to questions. Teachers assess key tasks and exercise books include good advice and encouragement. Pupils are not generally involved in the allocation of grades and so are unable to identify their own attainment or the criteria for a higher level. Where pupils do have opportunities to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of their peers, they gain greater understanding of the criteria for success.
110. Leadership of the department is very good. Management is good. The department is committed to raising standards and there is a clear focus on learning. Teachers work as a team, with a free exchange of ideas and practices, although monitoring of the outcomes of the

department is not secure. The department is now based in an identifiable area, although the significant responsibilities of members outside the department are reducing opportunities for innovation or for attendance at history meetings.

111. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results for the GCSE have risen significantly.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well.
- Occasionally, higher-attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently.
- Very good use of a wide variety of resources stimulates pupils' interest and maintains their concentration well.
- Effective use of assessment ensures that pupils know how to improve their work.
- A strong emphasis on local fieldwork helps pupils to conduct their own investigations successfully.
- Teachers receive extensive support and guidance from the subject leader.

Commentary

112. Standards are broadly average when pupils join the school, but are above national expectations by the end of Year 9, which represents good achievement. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to achieve well. Standards in GCSE were well below the national average in 2003, but improved dramatically in 2004 and were the best results the department has ever achieved. Standards in the current Year 11 are close to the national average, but this represents good achievement for this group of pupils. Girls achieve better than boys, but boys' standards are better than the national average for boys. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and achieve well. Higher-attaining pupils do not always make as much progress as they could, and there is currently no additional provision for gifted and talented pupils. There are no pupils with English as an additional language.
113. Teaching is good, overall, and includes some very good and excellent teaching, which promotes effective learning. Pupils benefit from warm relationships with knowledgeable staff. They are well motivated by teachers' high expectations and behave well during lessons. Their good attitudes to work help them to learn quickly. Very good use is made of a wide variety of resources, including ICT. In Year 7, for example, the teacher used the interactive whiteboard, video clips, a plant and a fossil very successfully to stimulate and maintain pupils' interest. Pupils benefit from careful lesson planning. Effective use of a variety of assessment techniques at the end of topics ensures that work is usually tailored to meet the needs of pupils of different ability, though occasionally, activities are not sufficiently challenging for higher-attaining pupils. Individual targets and detailed comments on marked work ensure that pupils know what to do to improve. Pupils enjoy fieldwork projects in the local area, and this provides them with the skills needed to complete GCSE coursework successfully. There are good opportunities to use the Internet for individual research during lessons. In Year 8, for instance, pupils worked through an interactive program to explore the ecology of a coral reef. They also use ICT skills well when presenting coursework assignments. Homework is set and marked regularly in all years and is used effectively to reinforce and build on work covered during lessons.
114. Leadership and management are very good. The subject is very well organised by an enthusiastic head of department. Pupils' work is monitored closely and analysis of their progress is very good. Regular observation of teaching and high quality support through extensive guidance on detailed schemes of work contributes effectively to a high standard of

teaching. Regular use of different writing styles develops pupils' literacy skills, while numeracy skills are honed when interpreting graphs and charts. Accommodation is good, and there is a wide variety of resources, including interactive whiteboards in each of the geography rooms. The development of ICT resources to assist teaching and learning represents a good improvement since the previous inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 is above average.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in all years.
- Three specialist teachers all have good command of the subject.
- The shared sense of purpose creates an effective teaching team.

Commentary

115. Attainment of pupils by the end of Year 9 is at the standard expected by the agreed syllabus. Pupils understand how the beliefs of the religions they study have an effect on both individuals and communities. They use specialist vocabulary correctly and give their own informed responses to questions of belief and value. Achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory.
116. Attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 exceeds the standard expected. Many pupils, a substantial minority of the year group, follow the GCSE short course and these pupils obtain grades well above the national average. Other pupils, the majority, follow the Dorset Achievement in Religious Education certificated course. Results are very good, with most pupils obtaining their certificate with merit or distinction. Religious education contributes well to all aspects of pupils' personal development. Achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good.
117. Teaching and learning are good. Three specialist teachers ensure that lessons have many good features. Planning of lessons, engagement of pupils, methods of teaching, use of time and insistence on good behaviour are all strong. The combined result of these good features ensures that pupils learn well. Assessment is also good, with regular tasks that lead to pupils' knowing not only how well they are doing but also what they need to do to improve. Pupils display positive attitudes and behaviour.
118. The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 but the amount of time the school provides is less than the minimum specified by the agreed syllabus and considerably less than the school provides for other humanities subjects. Whilst there is sufficient time to meet minimum statutory requirements, the scope for development is limited.
119. Leadership and management are both good. The leadership provides a good role model for other staff and for pupils. The shared sense of purpose has created an effective teaching team. Leadership has also been clear-sighted and innovative, especially in the introduction and use of national levels of attainment. Management of the department includes not only self-evaluation but also ways of measuring trends in attainment on a year-to-year basis.
120. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 has improved. Achievement improves as pupils move up the school. Improvement is significant and closely related to the adoption of good procedures for assessment.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The breadth of curricular opportunities and innovation provide pupils with a varied and very worthwhile technological experience.
- GCSE results are well above average.
- Teaching is very good overall, with much of it excellent.
- By the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement is very good.
- Excellent leadership and management have fostered an atmosphere where progress and development of the technology curriculum are the norm.
- Excellent accommodation and resources provide a stimulating modern technological environment for learning.
- A small number of projects do not provide sufficient structure for pupils to develop independent working skills.

Commentary

121. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 encounter a wide range of experiences that equip them very well indeed for life in a modern technological world. Recently revised assessment procedures provide clear targets for pupils and careful planning ensures that all National Curriculum programmes of study are thoroughly covered. Inspection evidence indicates that Year 9 pupils are working at above-average standards, which, based on below-average ability at the start of the course, represents good achievement. They are able to apply a wide range of skills and knowledge to solving design problems. A strong feature is the way that ICT and computer-aided design and manufacturing are integrated into projects at all appropriate stages, allowing higher-attaining pupils to extend their work and conduct independent research. The same facilities allow lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to make similar progress to their peers. Work in textiles is creative and imaginative and, in engineering and food technology, pupils have good opportunities to develop numeracy skills. Pupils develop good organisational skills as they plan and carry out their work in most technology areas. In a small number of lessons, achievement is hindered because projects are not set at an appropriate level and not sufficiently structured to enable pupils to develop independently.
122. 2003 GCSE results were well above average and comparative figures show that pupils' achievement is very good. Provisional figures for 2004 indicate a further increase. The gap between the performance of boys and girls is much narrower than that seen nationally and the breadth of curriculum opportunities is a significant factor in achieving this. There is a range of appropriate courses to match the interests and aptitudes of most pupils, including engineering and non-examination courses. Standards for current Year 10 and 11 pupils are well above average. They are particularly high in textiles and graphics, where pupils are able to apply good practical skills in a creative and independent way. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of technological processes is good. In engineering, for example, pupils are able to read and interpret engineering features from working drawings and use a centre lathe to machine components accurately. Lower-attaining pupils sometimes confuse technical vocabulary, but the practical nature of the work maintains their motivation and enables them to achieve well. Very good use of ICT is a key factor in enabling all pupils to develop at an appropriate rate. Achievement overall is very good.
123. Teaching is very good and has some excellent features. Teachers have a high commitment to professional development, reflected in their willingness to adopt responsibilities for developing technology education at a local and national level. Lessons are planned in detail and teaching utilises a wide variety of appropriate techniques. Teachers' enthusiasm for becoming involved

with wider aspects of technology has led to an extensive programme of exciting extra-curricular activities that enriches pupils' social and cultural development. The effect of the best teaching can be seen in the high level of pupils' involvement and the good relationships developed. Just a small amount of satisfactory teaching lacks the vigour and structure needed to give pupils a clear direction for their work. Teachers benefit from excellent technician support.

124. Excellent leadership and management have provided a very clear vision for the development of the subject through a period of considerable change. There is a clear recognition of the central role of the subject within the technology college framework and as a focus for joint activities with business and industry. Links with the world of work are far more extensive than is commonly found and provide many opportunities for setting design projects in a realistic context. Success in local and national design competitions has boosted pupils' confidence and improved motivation, which is now very high. The head of faculty has been successful in developing a team of teachers with in-depth skills and forward-looking attitudes. Accommodation and resources have been transformed and, together with high quality displays of work, now provide an excellent and stimulating environment for an up to date technology education.
125. Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good, and pupils' achievement is very good as a result.
- Leadership and management are very good, and there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to work in three dimensions in Years 7 to 9 to develop their skills fully.

Commentary

126. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils' achievement at the end of Year 9 is good. They draw well, producing accurate and detailed studies from observation of cased insects, such as beetles and spiders. They make striking portraits, using digital cameras, and go on to develop them into emotionally charged paintings. They do this by skilful use of distortion and colour. Their pattern work is bright and bold, and they use bright yellows and lime greens to create lively abstract designs. However, while they model in clay effectively, there are not enough opportunities for them to work in three dimensions for them to fully develop their skills in this area of study.
127. At the end of Year 11, standards are well above average. Pupils draw confidently, using a wide range of materials. For example, they produce vibrant ink drawings from a study of plant forms, and atmospheric landscapes in pastel. Their work in photography is very well composed, and they develop and print striking photographs based on a study of the urban environment. They use ICT very well to produce eye-catching magazine cover designs, which are of a very high standard. Their sketchbooks are vigorous, and they often include very thorough study of the art of other cultures.

128. Examination results at GCSE were well above average in 2003. Both boys and girls did much better than their respective national averages. Pupils did broadly as well in their art and design as they did in most of their other subjects. In 2004, results show further improvement.
129. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Because of this, pupils make very good gains in skills knowledge and understanding of the subject, and achievement at the end of Year 11 is very good. Strengths of the teaching include the teachers' very good subject knowledge, and the very good individual advice that they give as a result. Teachers are also very enthusiastic about the subject, and introductions are often lively and very interesting. These factors produce very high levels of interest, with pupils often absorbed in their work, and very good learning. In a very small number of lessons, however, mostly in Years 7 to 9, methods and materials are not interesting enough to excite or inspire pupils, and the pace begins to slow, which limits learning to a satisfactory level.
130. Leadership and management are very good. There has been a focus on raising standards, which has been very successful. Results at GCSE have improved considerably, and standards are now well above average in Year 11. The quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' achievement, has also improved. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore very good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good features.
- Better attainment and higher results are prevented because of the lack of soundproofed accommodation.
- The extra-curricular activities provide an unusually wide range of musical experiences for pupils.
- The peripatetic tutors contribute a great deal to the musical life of the school.
- Pupils who are gifted or talented are encouraged to do as well as they possibly can.

Commentary

131. The standard of pupils' attainment on entry represents a very wide range of musical experience and expertise, but basic knowledge is below average overall. By the end of Year 9, pupils have achieved well and they reach approximately average standards. In order to establish a working base of knowledge for the pupils, teachers have concentrated on the vital areas of note values and names. Where this is closely tied to the sound of the music, it is very effective. Those who attend extra-curricular sessions in music reach above-average standards of playing and singing.
132. Teaching and learning are good overall and are never less than satisfactory. In almost all lessons seen, pupils of all abilities and musical knowledge and expertise were catered for; the department is particularly good at challenging gifted and talented pupils and making them use all prior knowledge and skill they may already have. Subject knowledge is good overall with some examples of excellence. Lessons and extra-curricular sessions illustrate the very good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. Assessment is used sensibly so that pupils know how they are getting on and what they have to do to improve. This is particularly well used in Years 10 and 11 for the GCSE course work.
133. Results in the recent GCSE examination were average, as are the standards seen in lessons. Extra-curricular sessions almost always take place when there are no other lessons or rehearsals taking place. This means that the staff and pupils can hear what they are doing, with the result that standards here are almost always well above the national expectations, representing good achievement over the time the pupils are in school. The accommodation is

not soundproofed, which has a depressing effect on standards in lessons, particularly where pupils' compositions or close aural analyses are undertaken. Both these elements represent the majority of the examination course.

134. The extra-curricular provision is very good indeed. Pupils are exposed to a wide cultural experience that extends their learning in many areas. Djembe drumming, African part-singing and the more usual range of activities, such as boys' singing groups, jazz band and string ensembles, all form a very rounded musical basis for pupils. Peripatetic tutors contribute much to the musical life of the school.
135. There have been many major changes since the last inspection that make reliable judgements about improvement impossible. The situation is now settled, with a teacher in charge who is also the manager for the performing arts, and enough teaching staff to cover music for pupils from 11 to 18. There insufficient teacher or instructor time to staff the fledgling music technology AS and A2 course and the music element of the AS and A2 performance studies course. The department has opted to make one focus the preparation of pupils in the feeder primary schools, and as the AS and A2 courses become established and command greater numbers.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching means pupils achieve well at all ages and very well on examination courses.
- The curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, has excellent breadth and balance and provides very well for continuity and progression in pupils' learning.
- There has been very good improvement since the last inspection as a result of inspired leadership and exemplary departmental teamwork.
- There is inconsistent use of planning to identify short-term targets for individual learning.

Commentary

136. GCSE examination results continue to improve every year. In 2003, they were above the national average, representing very good achievement. In 2004, results rose dramatically, even from this position of strength. Current Year 10 and 11 GCSE pupils are maintaining these high levels of achievement. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are above those expected nationally. Achievement is good because most pupils progressively improve games' skills and techniques and performance and understanding in other areas. Eventually, they combine and apply these elements, showing a good understanding of tactics and strategies. Achievement is further enhanced by good observation and evaluation skills that enable pupils to assess and modify their performances and to give feedback to others confidently to help them assess their own strengths and weaknesses.
137. Pupils' learning and motivation benefits very well from the excellent breadth and balance of activities on offer. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement in the timetable and staffing and the building of the new community sports hall. The "Gold Sportsmark" award from the Sports Council is a fitting testimony to recent developments. Personal and social education and citizenship are valued and developed very well. Regular involvement by all pupils in outdoor adventurous lessons and a vast number of residential trips greatly enhance leadership qualities, teamwork and self-esteem. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is particularly successful in that it maintains challenges and continues to improve the performances of pupils who do not choose GCSE courses. In addition, new sports leaders' courses are increasing opportunities, and subsequently leadership qualities, of some of the older pupils. The department continues to provide an excellent array of extra-curricular opportunities that are a credit to the commitment staff and enable pupils of all

abilities to improve their individual and team performances, often to very high levels. Rates of participation are very high.

138. Teaching and learning are very good overall and often excellent. Teachers consistently set tasks that make clear what is to be learnt. These tasks are logically sequenced to the final required outcomes and always create a lively pace for learning. For example, innovative tasks in many observed outdoor and adventurous and fitness lessons increase pupils' confidence, initiative and communication skills. Teaching is considerably improved by the excellent use of digital cameras and video to demonstrate relevant techniques and to analyse personal performances. Information and learning resources on the department intranet make a significant impact on learning because pupils use them for research or for homework and projects. Teachers use a variety of methods to stimulate learning. There is an excellent literacy policy and with considerable skill, staff vary tasks to stimulate discussion, improve writing and test pupils' understanding by the use of thinking and evaluatory judgements. As a result, the use of technical vocabulary in games, outdoor education, health-related fitness and in GCSE theory lessons is of a high calibre.
139. Visionary leadership and clear departmental management roles have enabled the department to respond to national initiatives well, resulting in very good improvement since the last inspection. There is a very good ethos for learning that values all pupils and seeks improvement in their learning through targeted intervention and support. Varied and innovatory programmes, such as 'bridging units' with feeder primary schools and additional coaching and counselling, leads to higher-attaining pupils making very good progress. Similarly, pupils with special education needs achieve well because of sensitive grouping arrangements and teaching. Good progress has been made in providing assessment criteria that pupils understand well. Progress in learning is better in those lessons where teachers set short-term targets for all pupils, based on their previous learning. New staff are supported very well, but their subsequent development is not focussed as clearly as it could be on improving pupils' standards.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment at the end of Year 9 and of Year 11 is well below average.
- Achievement by pupils in all years is poor.
- Attitudes to citizenship as a subject are unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and learning within lessons are good.
- Procedures for assessment are undeveloped.
- No rooms are set aside for the teaching of citizenship.

Commentary

140. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is well below average. Pupils take part in school- and community-based activities, demonstrating personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and others. What they lack, however, are broad knowledge and understanding of the topics that the programme of study requires. It is evident in lessons and pupils' work that achievement is poor.

141. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is similarly well below average. Pupils continue to be active and involved as young citizens both within and outside the school. Evidence of the comprehensive knowledge and understanding required, however, remains absent, as does evidence of the capacity to exercise critical evaluation. Pupils fail to make the progress of which they are capable. Achievement is poor.
142. Teaching and learning in individual lessons are good. Teachers' planning of lessons, their engagement with pupils, methods of teaching, use of time and insistence on good behaviour are all good features. All other aspects of teaching and learning are at least satisfactory. Assessment, however, is unsatisfactory. No evidence of pupils' attainment is available. The school lacks the procedures necessary to measure performance.
143. The main reason that achievement is low is the poor curriculum. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have only one lesson every two weeks in a course that combines both citizenship and a programme of personal, social and health education. The combined course receives only two per cent of curricular time. The length of the gaps between lessons prevents continuity and progression in learning. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have one lesson a week, but lack the necessary foundation on which to build.
144. Leadership is satisfactory, aware of the inadequacy of the situation, but unable to make the changes necessary. Shared purpose and aspirations are clearly evident in the department's recent internal review, but equally clearly, they are unrealisable in present circumstances. Management is unsatisfactory. Self-evaluation has correctly identified strengths and weaknesses but failed to identify or measure the detrimental effect of what amount to one-off lessons provided only once every two weeks.
145. Citizenship as a subject has no base in the school. Pupils have no room in which to see relevant wall displays or their own work and teachers have to teach in many different rooms, reflecting and reinforcing the subject's current lack of status in the school.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE 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
English Literature	16	100	99.5	81.3	46.5	103.8	86.5
French	1	100	98.8	0	51.5	80	87.6
Mathematics	8	100	96.7	62.5	55.6	90	88.8
AVCE Science (Y12 only)	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Physics	9	100	96.7	22.2	44.6	73.3	81.7
History	7	100	99	28.6	44.6	82.9	84.6
Geography	5	100	98.7	40	44.5	76	84
Psychology	6	N/a	N/a	50	N/a	N/a	N/a
Design and Technology (Product Design)	11	100	97.8	36.4	35	80	77.9
Design and Technology (Engineering)	2	100	N/a	50	N/a	N/a	N/a
AVCE National Diploma in Art and Design	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
ICT	4	100	95.6	25	24.6	75	69.5
Drama	2	100	N/a	0	N/a	N/a	N/a

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
CSLA	N/a	100	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English language was sampled in Years 12 and 13. Teaching is well informed. Students make good progress and attain in line with their abilities, but do not readily take responsibility for their own learning.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in 2003 were very good.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students do not take enough responsibility for developing their learning and research.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

146. In the A-level examinations in 2003, approximately 80 per cent of students were awarded the highest grades, with more than twice the national average obtaining grade A. The trend was towards further improvement from an already above-average level, with both male and female students attaining equally well. In 2004, each of the two candidates entered was awarded a higher grade. Results in AS-level examinations in 2003 and 2004 were broadly average.
147. Achievement in the sixth form is very good. Standards of entry vary widely. Most students enter the course with above-average attainment, although a significant minority has obtained average grades at GCSE. Almost all students make rapid progress, successfully bridging the gap between requirements in GCSE examinations and the different demands of sixth-form courses. They develop a tenacious, painstaking approach, in response to the high challenge of the set texts. Higher-attaining students in Year 12, studying *The Handmaid's Tale*, recognised the irony implicit in the contrast between the invention of the narrator and the restrictions of the regime in Gilead. Most students were able to glean from the text the contrast between the crude functionality of the system and indications of fundamental human yearning. However, very few had read other books by the author, or any examples of novels with similar themes. Students in Year 13 have a secure grasp of critical and analytical skills, and their essays clearly show an ability to relate literature to its historical and social context. The quality of research to support their wider understanding is variable although the work of higher-attaining female students had been researched with depth and tenacity.
148. Teaching is very good, and at times excellent. As a result of teachers' high levels of personal scholarship, good planning and systematic presentation, students rapidly develop confidence in critical and analytical skills and learn to use technical language appropriately and accurately. In one excellent lesson on the character traits of Othello, the skilful use of short-term objectives with comments noted on an interactive white-board enabled students in Year 13 to connect observations and information and come to succinct and perceptive conclusions. However, teachers do not always challenge and question effectively to ensure that students become independent, curious scholars whose interest in their chosen discipline extends beyond the requirements of the examination. Students' work is generally well marked, with some very detailed, diagnostic comment. Occasionally, some comments lack sufficient information to enable students to improve.
149. The coordinator, very recently appointed, leads and manages the sixth form courses well. In addition to the course in English literature, established after the previous inspection, she has, in response to students' requests, introduced a course in English language. She has carefully analysed systems for assessing students' work and put in place a rigorous monitoring procedure that ensures that students are fully informed about their progress and their

predicted grades. This has resulted in an improvement in the attitudes of students in Year 12 towards the quality and depth of their work, and they are becoming increasingly capable of initiating independent enquiry.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

150. Standards of literacy in other subjects are average. In most areas, students have a good grasp of relevant technical terms, which they use accurately and appropriately; most students express themselves fluently, using a wide vocabulary. However, inaccurate spelling and insecure use of punctuation undermines the overall quality of their work.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The focus of this inspection was on French. German is also offered in the sixth form. The number of students who have continued to study German in recent years has been low. One Year 12 lesson was observed during the inspection. Standards were above average and the quality of teaching was excellent.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in most aspects of their studies, but their speaking skills are underdeveloped.
- Target-setting is not sharp enough to help students to improve their levels of performance.

Commentary

151. In recent years, the number of students continuing their study of French beyond Year 11 has been low. As a result, meaningful comparisons with national standards cannot be made. However, AS and A2 results do show that the achievement of students has not been as marked as in the main school. In the current Year 12, there are five students and none in Year 13. The three candidates in A2 French in 2004 gained B, C and D grades, which represented satisfactory achievement.
152. The achievement of current students is satisfactory. They demonstrate good progress in writing skills at an early stage of their AS course. They learn successfully to develop appropriate language to express opinions and sustain an argument on abstract topics such as the press and the quality of personal relationships. Most come to terms with more complex structures as a result of rigorous teaching in this area of their studies. A strong emphasis on the rules of grammar gives students a good understanding of how language works. Their understanding of written French is also good. They develop an increasingly wide range of vocabulary well, but there is a shortage of background texts for students to consult.
153. The quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory. Teachers establish good relationships with their students. Their extensive, almost exclusive, use of French in the classroom sets an appropriate challenge to students and develops their listening skills well. However, it is not always pitched at a level that gives opportunities for students to respond promptly. As a result, students lack confidence and speak hesitantly. The gap between GCSE and AS in terms of oral work is not bridged successfully.

154. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers collaborate well to ensure that the scheme of work is executed appropriately. The marking of work is thorough and identifies individual weaknesses. Assessment procedures include half-termly reviews of progress with individual students. However, not enough is done to set clear, precise, short-term targets for students to help them improve their levels of performance.
155. Since the previous inspection, there has been satisfactory development of the subject. A2 results have improved although the number of students remains low.

MATHEMATICS

The school offers a course in level 2 key skills as an option that is taken up by a small number of students. In addition to this a dozen pupils, who obtained grade D or lower in year 11, are repeating the GCSE examination with a view to gaining a C grade or better. This course is very well taught so that the students are progressing well.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress because of good teaching.
- A2 results in 2002 and 2004 were below average.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and they achieve well.
- Good departmental leadership and management have secured good improvement since the previous inspection and identified areas for further improvement.
- Very good curricular arrangements that enable high attainers to study advanced mathematics early are leading to increased take-up in all mathematics courses.

Commentary

156. The standard of work seen during the inspection is broadly in line with national averages. Students' attainment when they enter the sixth form is somewhat below the national average. Most make good progress and achieve well so that those currently in Year 13, for example, are all on course for grades at E or above and in line with or better than might have been expected. They have a secure basic grasp of their work; they can, for example, manipulate algebra to simplify results and apply the rules to differentiate logarithmic and exponential functions in the calculus. Higher-attaining students can apply the necessary techniques to solve problems with trigonometric identities quickly, whereas lower attainers need guidance. Year 12 students are currently performing across the full range of A to E grades, with none on track to fail. Higher attainers are confident in handling surds and indices, whilst lower attainers are improving their ability to manipulate algebra with confidence when, for example, solving quadratic equations by completing the square.
157. A2 results in mathematics in 2002 were below the national average and are likely to be so again in 2004. This reflected discontinuity in their teaching because of staffing difficulties, which have now been resolved. In each case, the management of the department was decisive and effective in dealing with the problems. 2003 results were above average reflecting good teaching. Further mathematics results have proved better, with higher-attaining students performing very well. In each of the last two years, a student has gained done well enough in mathematics to gain a place to study at Cambridge University.
158. Students showed by their commitment in lessons how keen they are to do well. In discussions they spoke of how much they enjoyed their mathematics and how grateful they were to their teachers for their patience and willingness to help both in and out of lessons. These very positive attitudes contribute well to effective learning. Teaching is good and enables students to improve their understanding of the various aspects of mathematics well. Lessons are carefully prepared and presented, providing appropriate pace and challenge. All

teachers are well qualified and most are very experienced. Much of the sixth-form teaching seen was very good. In several lessons, effective use was made of the interactive whiteboards. Skilful discussion and questioning ensure that students understand and staff do not move onto new topics until all are confident.

159. Assessment is good. All work is checked through, often in class, with very good support from the teachers. There are examples of very good practice in marking where teachers write individual advice on how to improve. Other teachers use model answers and very clear marking schemes that demonstrate how examination questions should be answered to best effect. In general, however, there are no early short-term, timed tests, marked to examination standards to accustom students to answering questions under pressure.
160. Leadership and management are good, though formal procedures for unifying practice are not yet developed. Improvement has been good since the last inspection: all of the issues identified have been addressed effectively. There are more courses on offer and the number of students studying mathematics has grown substantially. For some years gifted and talented mathematicians have been identified and encouraged to enter early for examinations. The impact of this policy can now be seen in Year 12 where numbers have increased considerably. The very good teaching and mathematical challenges they have been given in their earlier years are now beginning to pay dividends. Just as important is the teachers' enthusiasm. As one student said, "Our maths teachers all come to work with a smile, and it's great".

Mathematics across the curriculum

161. In general the students' skills in mathematics are in line with those seen nationally, although in a few subjects the level observed was good or very good. In the advanced vocational course for design technology, for example, pupils worked to very fine tolerances when making pieces of work and programmed computer driven lathes very effectively making allowance for the nature of the materials used to ensure correct feed rates for the cutting tool. In geography, students interpret primary data effectively as part of their study of urban development in Birmingham. In a lesson taught by a mathematics teacher covering for the absence of the usual class teacher students were very skilfully enabled to derive the formula for simple harmonic motion from practical observation.

SCIENCE

Physics and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) science were the focus subjects. In addition, biology and chemistry were sampled. In these subjects, relatively small numbers have taken the A2 examination. Standards have fluctuated; comparison with national norms is not statistically valid because of the small size of entry. In recent years, some students have attained the highest grade (A) in both subjects. Comparison of individual performance with attainment at GCSE shows that almost all students match and many exceed expectations. Overall, students have achieved well in both subjects. The provision in both subjects has improved since the last inspection. Current teaching and learning are very good. Numbers are rising, standards improving and students are achieving very well. Leadership and management of both subjects are very good.

Provision in AVCE science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching results in very good learning.
- Students achieve well and are very committed to their studies.
- Very good leadership and management are rapidly establishing high quality in all aspects of the provision.
- Mechanisms for recording assessment of students' progress are under-developed.

Commentary

162. The course was introduced in September of this year; there are therefore only students in Year 12 and no external examination results.
163. Examination of students' files and observation of lessons indicate that standards are below the national averages. However, all students are attaining standards that exceed expectations based on their performance at GCSE and are achieving well.
164. The decision of the present students to choose this vocational science course has been based on very good information and careful personal counselling. Their evident enjoyment and satisfaction with their studies bears witness to the effectiveness of the option procedures.
165. All the teaching observed was very good and resulted in effective and secure learning. Teachers have excellent mastery of the subject and of the demands of the syllabus and are guiding students carefully through the course. Well-planned lessons link difficult underlying theory with practical and commercial applications of science. This adds relevance and interest to the work and clearly motivates students to work hard. A lesson on enthalpy involving the combustion of alcohols was made much more meaningful by relating the work to the industrially important Haber process. Relationships between teachers and students and amongst the students themselves are excellent. The mutually shared ambition to succeed adds much to the effectiveness of learning. Work on the regulation of breathing was enlivened by students measuring each other's lung capacity. The lesson was both effective and fun.
166. Leadership and management of this new course are very good. The work of the three teachers who share the responsibility is very well organised, links between different sections of the syllabus are built in and students are receiving a coherent set of learning experiences. Progress of individuals is constantly monitored by teachers assessing each section of work and by frequent meetings to evaluate overall performance. Students are kept fully informed through regular personal tutorials and given clear advice on what they need to do to improve. As yet, the procedures are very effective but informal. As they move further through the course, particularly when industrial placements come into play, these informal arrangements will be insufficient. Management has recognised this need and plans to formalise the recording of assessment are in hand.
167. Very adventurous schemes to place students in real-life situations that will involve them in the vocational applications of science are well under way and will significantly enrich learning opportunities.
168. A very firm foundation for this new subject has been quickly established. The potential to develop this valuable addition to the post-16 curriculum is very good.

Physics

Provision in A-level physics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their students well, have high expectations and respond to individual needs.
- Frequent, structured assessment gives teachers the opportunity to identify with students their progress towards targets and areas for improvement.
- Relative attainment is ahead of other science subjects in the school.
- Use is made of ICT to support and enhance learning opportunities but is still under-developed.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good.

Commentary

169. Over the last three years, no student has failed A-level physics. The number of higher grades (A or B) in 2003 was below the national average, but this improved in 2004 so that results are now better than the national average. Observation of lessons and review of students' files and coursework confirm that this standard is being maintained with current groups. Year 12 and 13 classes work hard and make good progress in their learning.
170. Results in AS level in 2003 were below the national average whilst results in 2004 were above the national average. The current Year 12 class contains some very high attainers and all are working at a standard that should ensure that they achieve at least a pass grade at the end of the year. Many are on track to achieve higher than this. Achievement overall is good.
171. In the lessons observed, teaching and learning was always at least satisfactory and sometimes very good. Teachers know their students well and are able to use this to ensure that individual weaknesses are addressed and students' confidence is boosted. Regular, structured assessment informs planning and provides feedback for students on the improvements required to meet their target grade. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and contribute to a positive learning atmosphere. In Year 13, students are able to identify the key variables in an oscillating mass-spring system and carry out calculations to identify time period. In Year 12, they have a good understanding of the photoelectric effect and can explain the origin of threshold frequency.
172. Lessons for both year groups are characterised by a sense of purpose and pace. Teachers have high expectations of students and students, in turn, respond very positively.
173. Leadership and management are very good. The course is structured and administered in a manner that enables students to reach their potential. The two teachers share modules of work and review progress as they work through topics.
174. The department has access to data-logging sensors and there is some use of ICT, but as yet it is not developed to the point where it is a regular feature of students' learning and it is not clearly identified in the schemes of work.
175. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good.
- Standards in the AVCE examination are above average.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- A good range of courses is offered.

Commentary

176. In the 2004 AVCE examinations, students were awarded grades that were above recent national averages. Work seen in Year 13 is above average and achievement is good. In a project that centres on ICT training, students produce well-informed audits that establish training needs. They identify the resources required and produce good training plans. They effectively analyse likely problems they may encounter and produce well-considered evaluations. Some students have difficulties planning and organising their work. Year 12 students make good progress researching websites. They develop good critical analyses of websites to be used to inform their own designs.

177. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the areas covered in the examination courses they teach and this is evident in the high-quality support and advice they give through marking and in practical sessions. Teachers plan and prepare the units of work for AVCE ICT very well. Lessons begin with clear objectives that they share with students to give direction to learning. The structure, pace and variety of activity are very successful in engaging and motivating learners. A major strength of the department is its assessment and target-setting. The progress that students make is very closely tracked and the information is very well used in regular sessions between teachers and students to agree ways forward. This process has been a key factor in raising attainment.
178. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of ICT and has in a short space of time developed a good range of courses to which students are responding very well. She is aware of the need to extend the range of courses to include a more academic dimension.
179. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, when no sixth-form provision existed.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

180. There is good provision for ICT across the curriculum, especially in design and technology and art. Students generally make good use of the facilities in the school to research and produce coursework using ICT.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching equips students with the skills they need to learn effectively.
- Students of all abilities make good progress.
- Occasionally, teachers' explanations are not clear enough.
- Very good use of resources, including ICT, stimulates pupils' interest and results in good attitudes to work.
- Very effective assessment and detailed marking ensures that students understand how to improve their work.

Commentary

181. Standards in the A-level examinations were below the national average in 2003. In 2004, however, standards were above the national average for 2003 and were the best results ever achieved by the department. These higher standards represented good achievement. Standards in the current Year 13 are below the national average, but these students are nevertheless achieving well based on their prior attainment. Both male and female students in Year 12 are achieving well.
182. Teaching is good, overall, and students learn effectively as a result. Students are well motivated by good relationships with knowledgeable subject staff. As a result, students have good attitudes to work and concentrate well, both during lessons and when studying on their own. There is a good emphasis on teaching effective study skills so that students know how to develop their own understanding and learn for themselves. They learn effectively by researching topics in pairs or small groups and discussing their findings with others. Teachers use a wide range of resources effectively, including interactive whiteboards and the Internet. In a stimulating lesson in Year 13, for example, the teacher made good use of the interactive

whiteboard to explore population growth and to plot graphs of food supply, while students used it to present their own findings. Lessons are planned carefully, though occasionally, teachers' explanations are not clear enough, and staff do not always ensure that all students have clearly understood all the concepts covered. Very good assessment of progress ensures they receive appropriate assistance. Detailed comments on work leave them in no doubt about how they can improve, and regular monitoring of progress, and their own self-assessment, shows clearly how their standards have improved. A strong emphasis on fieldwork, both in this country and abroad, provides students with the skills needed to complete data analysis questions successfully. There are good opportunities for them to use the Internet for individual research. In Year 12, for instance, students logged onto a variety of web sites to download images to illustrate their case studies on river landscapes.

183. The subject is very well led. Teachers work well as a team and receive good support from an enthusiastic head of department, especially on the use of up-to-date ICT resources. Management is also very good. The introduction of effective systems of assessment, for example, has led to improved standards of attainment, while the development of a wide variety of resources, including interactive whiteboards with associated software in each of the geography rooms, has contributed towards a good standard of teaching. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have the opportunity to reflect on issues of equality and democracy.
- Students learn well because they are encouraged to prepare for lessons.
- The enthusiasm of teachers is encouraging more students to study history.
- Good knowledge and understanding enable teachers to give good guidance.
- There is little monitoring of students' notes in order to ensure their use and quality.
- Students are not involved in monitoring their progress towards their predicted grades.
- The department does not identify the value-added to students' achievements.

Commentary

184. Standards at the end of Year 13 are average and achievement is good. Results in 2003 were in line with the average nationally, though the number of A and B grades was below average. Results in 2004 reveal an upward trend. Students use sources confidently to obtain information and present it clearly and appropriately. Higher-attaining students are able to make inferences and recognise underlying influences affecting the actions of individuals. They have a good understanding of the movement towards equality for African Americans. They recognise the different methods used and they reflect on areas of inequality that still need to be addressed. At times, their use of concepts is unclear and lacks precision. Higher attainers recognise the importance of identifying and evaluating differing views of history. They recognise the importance of supporting judgements with evidence and of considering the validity of that evidence. They identify the key points implicit in the essay questions, but other pupils do not always maintain a clear focus. Lower-attaining students include much detail without evaluating its relevance to the title. Generalised statements at times replace consistent analysis.

185. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students learn well in the sixth form because they are encouraged to prepare for lessons and are expected to discuss the issues involved. As a result, they have the opportunity to identify areas of uncertainty and to learn from each other. The use of syllabus plans enables students to work with teachers in preparation of their lessons and to recognise the shape and key focus of the course. Students are encouraged to use mind mapping to display information, which supports their

understanding and enables them to identify the links and influences in the period studied. Teachers have good subject expertise and as a result they are able to provide secure guidance and advice.

186. Students have good opportunities to assess their own work using examination criteria. Support and advice following essay assignments is good, although there is limited monitoring of day-to-day work, or advice for the development of note-making skills. The use of assessment to involve students in responsibility for their own learning and progress has begun, but the department is not yet identifying the value-added to their students' achievements.
187. The quality of leadership in the sixth form is very good and management is good. Numbers of students choosing to study history at A level is rising and the enthusiasm of teachers in the main school is contributing to this. The department reviews its results and sets appropriate targets. Support for revision prior to examination is good and teachers reflect on the outcomes.
188. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is making a positive contribution to improving some low levels of understanding in Year 12.
- Students make good progress in Year 13, representing good achievement compared to the results of their 2003 AS papers.
- Results in the 2003 AS and A2 examinations were below the national average and insufficient analysis has been made of the factors responsible.
- There is presently insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the impact of teaching and learning in psychology.
- There are limited amounts of primary and secondary research materials and information to aid students' research and interests.

Commentary

189. Achievement in Year 12 is satisfactory. Recent trends in AS results have been poor, with few higher grades. The number of students taking psychology in Year 12 has trebled this year. They are motivated learners and the highest attainers are working at a level expected for this stage of the course. These students are able to evaluate confidently the impact of various theories and empirical evidence on memory patterns when studying the theme of 'forgetting'. Some students are struggling early in the course, not having the confidence to articulate their thoughts on psychological theory and its relevance to their everyday lives. There are five students studying A2 psychology in Year 13 and their achievement is good. Results in A2 examinations have been variable in recent years, ranging from average to poor when compared to national standards. However, some students have achieved well and obtained the higher grades. Present Year 13 students have the potential to achieve similarly. Essays show a good understanding of the contemporary issues relating to social behaviour. They use this understanding well in lessons by further considering empirical evidence and personality types to make sense of the studies on the influence of the media on pro-social and anti-social behaviour.
190. Teaching and learning are good. The two teachers work well together and share expertise. The students report that their complimentary and varied styles and individual collective strengths have improved provision this year and inspection evidence confirms this

judgement. They plan well together and have just begun to compile useful individual records of students' achievement that have helped them present appropriate challenges in lessons. Appropriate links are made between topics studied, although there are insufficient additional resource materials. Teachers have high expectations require students to research independently and set regular homework. The setting of homework is not adequately coordinated between members of staff resulting in over-burdening deadlines. Learning is less successful when students do not respond to deadlines for homework. Some Year 12 students find it hard to talk about the theoretical aspects of their work and lessons lack the strategies to help them. More scope for promoting confident oral discussion is required. The essays of Year 13 students are marked well, showing clearly the strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement needed. They are used well in lessons to set targets and connections to new theories and topics.

191. This relatively new course is satisfactorily administered within the health and social care department. Well-qualified staff have been appointed to cater for the growing numbers. However, there is no subject leader to plan future provision. There has been no monitoring of teaching or sharing and discussion of varied approaches to teaching and learning. There has yet to be adequate analysis of students' performance in previous examinations, or their current rates of progress. For example value-added data is not rigorously analysed to inform future teaching.
192. The use of ICT is not an integral part of teaching and learning and insufficient use is made of the intranet. Insufficient use is made of enrichment activities, such as visits and conferences to further enhance learning.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

From the very wide range of courses offered, AS/A2 product design and AVCE engineering were inspected. AS/A2 systems and control was sampled. Results for systems and control students have been well above average with a high proportion of A and B grades. Teaching is very good and generates a high level of students' involvement in problem-solving activities. Current students are working at above average standards.

AVCE Engineering

Provision in AVCE engineering is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The course has successfully built on the strengths of a successful 11 to 16 course.
- The course is very relevant to the aspirations and aptitudes of its students.
- There are excellent opportunities for contact with local industries.
- Teaching is very good and leads to good achievement for students.

Commentary

193. This recently established course caters for the career aspirations of ten students who entered the current Year 12 with varied GCSE grades from a range of design and technology subjects. The depth and breadth of teacher expertise in this area has enabled single- and double-award courses to be offered by a team of four teachers.
194. The course has been carefully structured to give students engineering knowledge and skills as well as valuable experience of working in close contact with an industrial environment. A professional presentation from a local research and development company, for example, has fired students' enthusiasm for a group project to design a remotely operated vehicle to a specific design brief. Consequently, Year 12 students are developing good cooperative skills, have a good understanding of industrial processes and use technical vocabulary

appropriately. The excellent contacts established with industry are key factors in the quality of experience students receive. Students are working at above-average standards at this early stage in the course and their achievement is good.

195. Teaching is very good. Teachers have in-depth knowledge and experience of the subject and their enthusiasm enables them to communicate this in a very effective way. For example, a group discussion about universal couplings, levers and forces was effective in developing pupils' understanding of these engineering topics. The wide range of teaching strategies employed also developed students' key skills of speed-reading, use of ICT and problem solving. Good assessment procedures enable teachers to track students' progress and give accurate advice on how to improve. Students have confidence in the quality of teaching they receive and respond with positive attitudes, which builds very good relationships and a positive working atmosphere.
196. Excellent leadership and management have overseen the development of the course from successful experience of similar work at GCSE level. There is a very good overview of the course and teachers have been deployed in a way that utilises their skills and expertise to maximum advantage. Accommodation and resources are excellent and full use is made of high-quality ICT and computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment to reinforce understanding of industrial methods.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY; PRODUCT DESIGN

Provision in design and technology; product design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good overall with some excellent practice.
- Results in A2 examinations show an improving trend.
- Students' achievement overall is good.
- The breadth of courses within product design provides students with very good opportunities to build on their strengths.
- Work in textiles and graphics is of high quality.
- Excellent contacts with business, industry and other organisations enable students to develop design work in a relevant context.
- Opportunities are missed to unify the teaching of textiles, resistant materials and graphics elements of product design as a unified course.

Commentary

197. GCE results in 2003 were above average. The average points score per student was above national averages and reflected good achievement for students. This was an improvement on previous results and, together with a further increase in the provisional results for 2004, reflects an improving trend. An unexpected drop in AS results in 2004 resulted in some students not meeting their target grades. These results are currently being disputed and the department has taken steps to analyse the causes and take appropriate action.
198. A strength of the department lies in the depth and quality of teaching skills and experience which enables three strands of product design to be taught, in some cases, to a very high level. Work from current Year 12 and 13 students in textiles, for example, is well above average. Many students also have a background in art and design and this supports the creative and imaginative qualities of their work. Their products are made to high standards, with an emphasis on quality manufacturing skills. Sketchbooks are used very effectively as a record of developing ideas and experimentation. Presentations of their work at local and national levels have rightly earned acclaim.

199. Year 13 students in graphics are able to use a combination of very good freehand sketching and computer-aided design to communicate their ideas. Students have good three-dimensional modelling skills and these are used very effectively across a range of materials and techniques. Where appropriate, computer-aided design and manufacturing techniques are employed to give a near-professional quality to the work. The involvement of Year 12 students in a large-scale group commission for a local theatre has increased motivation, developed confidence and provided opportunities for developing teamwork in a relevant context.
200. Higher-attaining students in Year 13 resistant materials are able to compile good design folders with independent research and good presentation techniques. Year 12 students have a good understanding of design processes and what the key elements of a design brief are and can use technical vocabulary with understanding. Although some students enter this strand of the course with comparatively low GCSE results, their achievement is good.
201. Teachers have a high level of commitment to developing their professional skills. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good, with some excellent examples of good practice. Through regular reviews and good written and verbal advice, students are given a clear sense of direction for their work and what they must do to improve. The best teaching emphasises the value of independent working and gives students the skills and confidence to do this. In a small proportion of teaching, opportunities for developing these skills are not fully exploited. Students' attitudes are very positive and they value the experiences the course has to offer.
202. Very good leadership and management have contributed to the very good teamwork and levels of cooperation that pervade the department. This level of involvement has contributed to the excellent improvements since the last inspection. The department is aware that there is a need to take further steps to unify the teaching of the three areas.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

203. The **performance studies** A2 course was sampled, but not focused upon in depth. It showed that in dance in Year 13, the students' standard of attainment is high in performance and choreography. Teaching is excellent. It is knowledgeable, exciting and stimulating. Students show initiative and determination as a response to the rigour and high expectations of teaching. Over a two-lesson period, students evaluated their choreographic skills and understanding of a group routine based on a motif of the Angel of the North. Their excellent learning is characterised by an understanding of technical vocabulary and the speed with which they analyse videoed rehearsals to refine their performances.

Art and design

Provision in the National Diploma in art and design course is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are excellent, and the course is active and exciting.
- Standards are well above average in Year 13, and ICT is used in exciting and very effective ways.
- The course makes an excellent contribution to students' appreciation of the world of professional art and design.
- Teaching and learning are very good, and students achieve very well as a result.
- In a very small number of lessons, the pace is good, rather than very good, and this limits learning to a similar level.

Commentary

204. Leadership and management are excellent. This is a new course, which has been established with vision and enthusiasm. Although it has been running for less than two years, the projects on offer are already very active and interesting. Students often visit local harbours and the coast, and tropical gardens and art galleries. They explore the richness of these environments, gathering visual information in sketchbooks and with cameras. They also attend life-drawing classes, and take part in workshops with visiting professional artists. As a result, interest levels are very high, and students are very enthusiastic about their work.
205. Standards are well above average in Year 13. Students' painting is vigorous and their composition work is very thorough. ICT is used extremely well, and students produce calendars and postcards, depicting local scenes, which are of a very high professional standard. In addition, they create unusual and interesting computer animations based on the patterns traced by the lights of traffic at night, or the figures of skateboarders in action. Monoprints are also vigorous and exciting, with incisive lines looping and swirling to form the features of the human face and figure. Life drawings also very accurately represent the proportions of the human figure at rest.
206. The course makes an excellent contribution to students' understanding of the world of professional art and design. They work to professionally presented briefs, and are involved in marketing and selling work, such as calendars, to the public. They meet professional artists and designers, and receive excellent individual advice as they discuss their own work with them. This means that they gain unusually clear insights into the skills that they will need to work effectively in the world of commercial art and design.
207. Teaching and learning are very good. The best lessons have a very high level of challenge, and teachers pursue high standards. For example, in a lesson on life drawing, students had to work from the human figure. The model was posed to give challenging viewpoints, which demanded a high level of skill, especially to represent the foreshortening of the limbs when seen from difficult angles. Students rose to this challenge, and were inspired. Learning was excellent as a result. In a very small number of lessons, the pace is good rather than very good, and this limits learning to a similar level. However, because the quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, students' achievement is very good, and they make much better gains than expected considering their standards at the start of the course in Year 12.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strength and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Standards in the recent AS examination were average.
- Standards of acting, characterisation and staging work are above average.
- The lack of soundproofing limits achievement.
- The extra-curricular work provides a good extension to students' learning.

Commentary

208. Recent and consistently good teaching have lifted the results to the average level they reached in AS examinations in 2004. Already the staging elements of the course in Years 12 and 13 show that students have an above-average grasp of how to approach characterisation in many different ways. They work hard to understand the implications of Shakespearean language and arrive at a credible, modern-day version of Hamlet's soliloquy beginning, "To be, or not to be, that is the question". Students achieve well in lessons and if this progress is maintained will obtain improved results next year. Assessment is wisely used so that students

know the standard at which they work and what they have to do to improve. Students take responsibility for their drama journals and they make good use of the extra-curricular provision, both formal and informal. Their researches into the Salem witch-hunts and the reason for Miller's particular way of writing *The Crucible* intrigues them and fires their imagination with enthusiasm for the play.

209. The level of neighbouring noise evident in the drama studio is high, coming from peripatetic music lessons, bands practising and from the dance studio immediately next door. It says much for the teachers and students that they apply themselves to the tasks in hand without becoming unduly frustrated, though standards are inevitably compromised with this level of extraneous noise.
210. Teaching displays excellent subject knowledge. Relationships are very good in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. In the work on the difference of opinion between Ophelia and Polonius, students have to understand the motives and subtext within the writing to make the characters realistic, in which they succeed admirably. As a result of the teaching, students learn well, working well as a group, behaving with increasing maturity and meeting the challenges of research and time management.
211. Recent re-organisation in the performing arts area means that there is now a teacher in charge of drama with assistance from two dance teachers. There is a need for another subject specialist as the numbers in the AS and A2 classes are increasing. There are many opportunities for pupils and students to 'showcase' their work, but this puts a heavy demand on the teachers who make this possible.
212. At the time of the last report, drama was about to become a sixth-form subject, so it is not possible to make a judgement on improvement.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Provision in community sports leadership is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- This is a well-established course, run by experienced and enthusiastic staff.
- Very good community-related experiences are provided.
- The course develops personal skills and citizenship qualities very well.

Commentary

213. This is a very popular course allowing alternative routes for those students interested in sport. The course is also a compulsory pathway for those students chosen to attend the Weymouth Football Academy, based at the college. Recent trends show 100 per cent pass rates and the standard of work seen during the inspection is in line with course expectations. High motivation overcomes some of the difficulties which result from low attainment on entry. However, standards and achievement are improving as a result of more average and higher attainers transferring from 14 to 16 GCSE physical education and Junior Sports Leader courses.
214. The leadership and management of the course are very good. There is a dedicated team, committed to ensuring success for the students. The course reflects the underlying ethos of the physical education department so that PSHE and citizenship are valued and developed well within it. It is also particularly successful in that it continues to improve the performances of pupils who do not choose GCSE courses. In addition, the course offers increased opportunities, which leads to enhancement of students' leadership qualities.

215. Teaching and learning are good. In observed lessons students made good progress in planning a series of activities for very young children. They used their good coordination to experiment with a range of athletic resources and then consider the safety and appropriateness of the tasks for younger children. A small number of students struggled to concentrate and focus when the tasks required self-discipline. In subsequent sessions, students teach the activities to the nursery children based at the college. Students perform very well. They are sensitive to all needs and are mature and motivated in their performances, which prepares them well for future experiences in community sport.

BUSINESS

216. While not inspected in detail, the school's post-16 **business studies OCR National Certificate course** provision was sampled. Teaching and learning are very good and the subject consistently helps students make good progress. This largely reflects general teaching quality, but also stems from the strong emphasis placed on students' independent and group work. It also owes much to the very effective assessment and tracking system used by the department: this allows both teacher and student to know the starting point and targets and to see how each piece of work confirms or detracts from expectations.

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

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