

INSPECTION REPORT

CALDEW SCHOOL

Dalston, Carlisle

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112440

Headteacher: Mr A Abernethy

Lead inspector: David M Bain
3258

Dates of inspection: 29 November – 2 December 2004

Inspection number: 268762

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:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	984
School address:	Dalston Carlisle Cumbria
Postcode:	CA5 7NN
Telephone number:	1228 710044
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Wilkinson
Date of previous inspection:	19 April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Caldew is a Foundation School for pupils aged 11-18 situated in the village of Dalston, some five miles south of Carlisle. The school is of average size with 984 on roll, of whom 170 are in the sixth form. There are, currently, marginally more girls than boys overall. Pupils come to the school from a very wide area. However, whilst most come from rural communities and very small primary schools, about a third come from the city of Carlisle. Only about 15 per cent live within walking distance, with the majority relying on buses to reach the school. Almost all pupils are of white British background. None of the small number from other ethnic groups is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Whilst the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, around 7 per cent, is below average, the intake of pupils is from a broad, and fairly average, range of social backgrounds. About an eighth of pupils are identified as having special educational needs. This is broadly in line with national average, as is the number with statements of need. Overall, pupils' attainment is broadly average on entry. The number of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the start of Year 7 is broadly average. A partnership with Morton School in the sixth form increases the range of courses on offer, as does collaboration, where necessary, with other schools and colleges. In 2003, the school successfully gained specialist status as a business and enterprise college.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Caldew is a very effective school, with some excellent features. It provides a very good education for its pupils. Standards are above average and pupils achieve very well. There is a very strong ethos: everyone gets on well together. Pupils' very positive attitudes support very good learning. Most teaching is good, much very good or outstanding. Provision for the care and welfare of pupils is excellent. The school is very well led. Commitment to inclusion and concern for the needs of individuals are excellent. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good.
- Standards attained at GCSE are generally above average and consistently well above average in mathematics, double award science, design and technology and physical education.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is very good. There are examples of excellence across the curriculum and teaching is rarely less than good.
- The commitment of all in the school to inclusion, promotion of equality and concern for the needs of individuals is excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. The school's very strong ethos is built upon very good relationships.
- Leadership, management and governance of the school are very good, as is the school's use of self-evaluation and performance data.
- Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is excellent, whilst support, advice and guidance are very good.
- Pupils' personal development is very good, supported by very good provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE).
- Provision in design and technology is excellent.
- Use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is underdeveloped.
- Pupils are involved extremely well in the life of the school and make a valuable impact on its work.
- Aspects of curricular organisation and management, including those related to pupil grouping, option planning and the implementation of work-related learning lack coherence.
- Although good overall, and improving, some aspects of accommodation and learning resources remain unsatisfactory.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved significantly, as has the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, very good progress has been made on the key issues identified in the last inspection. Improvement in provision for physical education is excellent; that for PSHCE is very good and that for religious education is good. Improvement in the behaviour of pupils is good, with a range of strategies introduced to address more challenging behaviour. The issue of collective worship has not been addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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.

Pupils' achievement is very good. It increases as they move through the school. They enter the school with standards which are broadly average and attain above average standards in national tests at age 14. In 2004, results in mathematics and science were well above average. Performance at GCSE is generally above average. In 2004, it was well above average in mathematics, double award science, design and technology, art and design, music, business studies, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). Attainment in the sixth form is well above average. The achievement of those with special educational needs matches that of other pupils. The gap in attainment between boys and girls is narrowing.

Pupils' personal qualities are very good. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good overall, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning and are keen to take on responsibilities.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The quality of teaching is very good, overall, as is the quality of pupils' learning and assessment. This is because teaching and learning are rarely unsatisfactory and are good or better in the vast majority of lessons. Some excellent teaching was seen in design and technology, physical education, PSHCE, music, English and mathematics, and some very good in all other subjects. Overall, the quality of teaching is excellent in design and technology and very good in mathematics, science, history, music, physical education and PSHCE. Enjoyment is a strong feature of learning across the curriculum. Teachers use a variety of effective teaching strategies, which encourage pupils to collaborate, discuss and question, but use of ICT across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Curricular provision is good, with a good balance of academic and vocational courses offered from Year 10. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Opportunities for enrichment are good, as are participation in sports and the arts. Accommodation is good, and improving, although inadequate in some areas. Learning resources are satisfactory. Caldew is a caring school. Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is excellent, whilst support, advice and guidance are very good. The school values and acts upon the views of pupils and encourages their involvement. Links with parents are good, whilst those with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good, overall. Leadership of the headteacher is very good, and others with responsibilities lead their areas very well. They create a strong climate for learning. Very good management ensures the school runs very smoothly. Self-evaluation is honest and rigorous at all levels. Governors are very effective in the support they give and are highly involved in planning for the future, but have not ensured that statutory requirements are met fully. However, governance is very good, overall.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are satisfied with the school. Only a minority expressed concerns. These mainly related to the quality of information provided by the school on their children's progress or to the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils. Almost all say that their children like school and are expected to work hard, that teaching is good and children progress well. Most pupils are also very positive about the school. They are happy and appreciate that they are taught well. They feel the school listens to their views. Whilst they recognise that some poor behaviour and bullying exists, they indicate that it is dealt with effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- develop further the use of ICT across the curriculum;
 - review aspects of curricular organisation and management;
 - take further innovative action to address shortcomings in accommodation and resources.
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- review the provision for a daily act of collective worship and sixth form religious education.

THE SIXTH FORM

The average-sized sixth form provides a good range of academic and vocational courses. Partnership with Morton School has strengthened this curriculum offer.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a very good education for its students. It is very effective. Results in 2003 were above average and reflect good achievement. There was further improvement in 2004. The quality of education provided is very good, with a wide range of academic and some vocational courses enhanced by partnership with other schools and colleges. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. There is a very positive ethos, which is reflected in students' very positive attitudes. It provides very good value for money.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is very good, overall. It is at least good in most subjects, very good in English, mathematics, chemistry, physics and geography and excellent in design and technology. Results are also well above average in psychology and physical education.
- Standards in the sixth form are generally well above average.
- Students' attitudes are very good. They willingly take on responsibilities and display enterprise.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good in the vast majority of subjects.
- The school's involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is excellent.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Teething problems in partnership arrangements with other schools are being addressed effectively.
- The breadth of the curriculum is good, although the offer below advanced level is too narrow.
- Students experience a good range of enrichment activities within the curriculum, but those outside the curriculum are less well developed.
- Accommodation for some sixth form teaching is inadequate and some group sizes are too large.

The sixth form has made very good progress since the last inspection.

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	Very good in English language: very thorough teaching and learning lead to very good student achievement, with students demonstrating very good independent research skills in their individual language studies.
Mathematics	Very good in mathematics: very good teaching and learning result in very good achievement and attainment, which is well above average. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent.
Science	Good in biology: students achieve well, because of very good teaching and learning. Large numbers of students opt for the subject, with most completing the A2-level course.
Information communication technology (ICT)	Good in ICT: attainment is above average. Teaching and learning are good, as is students' achievement. There is scope for developing company links as a resource for the advanced vocational course.

Humanities	Very good in geography: standards are above average and students achieve very well. Very good teaching challenges students, so that they quickly make the transition from GCSE to AS and A2-level. Good in psychology: standards are above average. Good teaching provides resources that link the wide range of studies undertaken.
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Curriculum area	Evaluation
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Excellent in product design: the standard of students' work is well above average and represents high achievement. Teaching and learning are excellent, as are students' attitudes and leadership of the subject.
Business	Very good in business studies: very good teaching is resulting in good achievement. Information technology is used well in the learning.
Health and social care	Very good in health and social care: teachers' high expectations of all students promote a good level of achievement. There is a good range of extra-curricular enhancement and input from professionals in the caring services.

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

Care, advice, guidance and support in the sixth form are very good. The school's involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is excellent. Students are given good guidance on course selection. They talk highly of the advice they are given. There is an effective system of monitoring students' progress and setting targets. Induction into the sixth form is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good, overall. The process of transition from Year 11 to Year 12 is very smooth, and students are guided and encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. The school has successfully gone into partnership with another sixth form. Although this partnership is in its early stages, day-to-day issues are dealt with very well, and any teething problems are being effectively tackled.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about the sixth form. They enjoy being in school and get on well with their peers. They are very positive about the quality of teaching they receive, which is both challenging and demanding. They are appreciative of teachers' very good subject expertise and feel that they are helped and encouraged to study independently and to research topics. They recognise, that in a few subjects, too much is done for them by some teachers. About a third of those who returned questionnaires raised concerns about the quality of advice on courses and careers. However, in discussions most indicated that they have been given good guidance on course selection. However, some feel the school needs to further develop school-university links to enhance the information on further study. A significant number of students indicated on their questionnaires that there was a lack of adult staff they could confide in, but, in contrast, during the inspection they talked highly of the advice they had been given. In part, they reflected that this depended on the role taken by sixth form tutors. Only some tutors use registration time effectively to inform guidance and pastoral care better. These same tutors tend to be accessible at other times

to give advice. Some students express concerns about partnership arrangements in the sixth form, but recognise these have enabled there to be a wide curriculum offer. Except for the Young Enterprise scheme, students feel that enrichment for sixth formers outside the curriculum is too limited.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, pupils' achievement is very good. Standards are broadly average on entry to the school, but generally above average in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in examinations in Year 11. Results in examinations in the sixth form are well above average. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs matches that of other pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in all years and almost all subjects. Consequently, pupils' achievement increases as they move through school and is very good by the time they leave. Very good achievement is a result of pupils' very positive attitudes and very good teaching.
- Attainment at the end of Year 9 in national tests is well above average in mathematics and science.
- Attainment at GCSE is generally above average. In 2004, results in mathematics, double award science, design and technology, art and design, music, business studies, physical education and short course ICT were well above average.
- Attainment in the sixth form in 2004 was well above average. It was well above average in English language, mathematics, physical education, psychology and ICT.
- Good use is made of detailed statistical analyses of the school's performance.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Those who arrive with literacy difficulties make substantial progress as a consequence of intensive support in Year 7.
- Achievement in design and technology is excellent across the ability range, from the ablest studying systems to those on a vocational catering course.

Commentary

1. Overall, when pupils join the school in Year 7 their attainment is broadly average. Results in diagnostic tests taken on entry, show pupils to have stronger quantitative skills than verbal skills. In the current Years 7-10, around four-fifths of pupils attained the average level, Level 4, or better at the end of Year 6 in national tests in English, mathematics and science. However, attainment in some other subjects is less high on entry.
2. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good, overall, and has improved in recent years. Results in national tests in 2003 were above average in English and average in mathematics and science. In contrast, results in 2004 were average in English and above average in mathematics and science. The proportion attaining an above average Level 6 or better was well above average in mathematics and above average in English and science compared to all schools. Results of boys and girls are similar in mathematics and science, but with girls attaining better than boys in English, as nationally.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.9 (34.4)	N/a (33.4)
mathematics	37.4 (35.4)	N/a (35.4)
science	34.3 (34.1)	N/a (33.6)

There were 152 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Pupils' achievement from the end of Year 9 to Year 11 is very good. Given their attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement overall, from Year 7 to Year 11 is very good. It is the

combination of good achievement year upon year which makes it very good overall. Attainment in external examinations at the end of Year 11 is generally above average. In 2003, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more A*-C and A*-G, and the average point score per pupil were above average both compared to all schools nationally and to similar schools based upon prior attainment. In 2004, results in most subjects improved. However, they were only average compared to similar schools, in part because of the non-entry of a small number of pupils, mostly girls. In 2003, the gap between the results of boys and girls was very wide. Boys attained in line with boys nationally, whilst girls attained well above girls nationally. The school has adopted a range of strategies to improve the performance of boys. In 2004, the gap between boys and girls narrowed significantly. Boys' results improved, but results of girls dropped, although they remained higher than those of boys overall. Girls performed significantly better than boys in art and design, English language and literature, French, German and food studies, but results were similar in other subjects. The ablest quarter of pupils, who might in some areas attend selective schools, attained an average point score which is above the average for grammar schools.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (59)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (93)	89 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.1 (37.8)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 174 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Results at GCSE vary significantly between subjects. In the last two years, results in English language have been above average, those in literature in line with the national average. Results in mathematics are consistently well above average, with a significantly higher proportion attaining the highest grades A and A*. In 2003, results in double award science were very high, with three-quarters attaining grades A*-C, nearly half of these A*-B. Whilst results in 2004 fell back, with around two-thirds attaining A*-C, they remain well above average. A small group each year study single science and agriculture as an alternative to double science. These tend to be lower attaining pupils. In 2004, all passed agriculture with over half attaining grade C or D. Results in the short course in information technology were well above average in 2004, with nearly three-quarters attaining grades A*-C and a quarter grades A or A*.
- Results are consistently well above average in design and technology, particularly in graphic products and systems. In both, three-quarters attained grades C or better in 2004. A particular strength of all areas of design and technology is the high proportion of grades A* or A, over a quarter of the entry, which is double the proportion nationally. A small group of pupils of below average ability follow a vocational catering course; all attain grades C to E. Results are also consistently well above average in physical education, where, in 2004, four-fifths attained at least grade C, including a third who attained A* or A. Those in art and design and business studies showed a significant improvement in 2004, with an exceptional 87 per cent attaining grades A*-C in art and design and three-quarters doing so in business studies. Results from a small entry in music in 2004 also well above average, with three-quarters attaining grades A*-C and half A* or A. Results in drama are in line with national averages.

6. Results in geography are consistently above average; in 2003, they were well above, with nearly a quarter attaining A* or A grades. Those in history were in line with those nationally in 2003, a little above average in 2004. Results in both French and German were above average in 2003. However, whilst those in German improved further in 2004, in French they were a little below average.
7. The school carries out detailed analyses of its results at all levels. Results in tests in Year 6 in primary schools and diagnostic tests on entry are used to set targets for Year 9 tests, both for individual subjects and pupils. In 2004, the target for mathematics was well surpassed. That for English was met and that science was not quite met. Results in Year 9 are used alongside teacher assessments to set challenging targets for GCSE in Year 11. Although those for 2004 were not met, the school has set even greater challenges for 2005. Results at GCSE are used to produce target grades for AS and A2-level in the sixth form. Analyses are also used as part of annual subject reviews. A governor has been given the task of analysing all the examination data, including national comparisons, and leads the governors' interrogation of the school's leadership over examination performance. All of this is an example of the leadership's good use of data.
8. Overall, in work seen during this inspection, pupils' achievement is at least good in the majority of lessons and was very good or excellent in over a third. It was less than satisfactory in only three lessons, all in Years 7 and 9. Overall, this represents very good achievement. The two greatest influences on pupils' achievement are their very positive attitudes and the very good teaching they receive. Achievement is best where pupils experience a range of teaching styles and where they are encouraged to work both collaboratively and independently.
9. Standards seen in English during the inspection are higher than recent examination results would suggest and represent good achievement. Pupils' standards of speaking and listening are above average. They participate well in small group discussion and present their ideas clearly and confidently. Reading skills are above average and standards of writing are at least average and improving. Most pupils write with increasing accuracy for a range of purposes and audiences. The content of the writing is lively and reflects a clear personal response. Standards seen in mathematics are above average. Higher attaining pupils achieve especially well by the end of Year 11. Pupils' work shows much care and attention and their knowledge and understanding are built upon well, resulting in very good overall achievement. Standards attained in science are well above average and achievement from Year 7 to 11 is very good. By Year 11, pupils have impressive analytical skills.
10. Standards seen in most other subjects were above average and achievement in individual subjects was at least good. Achievement is very good in PSHCE, music and the GCSE options in drama. Achievement is greatest in design and technology, where in Years 7-9 it is excellent. All contributory areas of design and technology produce work of a high quality. In Years 10 and 11, a vocational catering course is available to previously low attaining pupils with low predicted examination grades. Achievement on this course is excellent. An excellent residential experience at a hotel, where pupils are trained in and participate in the work of the hotel, inspires them and is an example of outstanding practice. In all areas of design and technology, by Year 11, standards in making are well above average. In systems, for example, pupils can design and construct complex electronic circuits and the devices, which contain them or are controlled by them, to a high standard. They are also able to explain how their circuits work, and what effect changing components has, very well indeed.
11. It is this combination of good achievement across the curriculum, with very good achievement in some subjects, including two of the core subjects – mathematics and science, and some excellent achievement in design and technology, which makes overall achievement very good.
12. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good in Years 7-9 where firm foundations are laid, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils make very good progress measured against the targets in their individual education plans. In Year 7, the

reading ages of some pupils with literacy difficulties increase by two years during a period of intensive support. No pupil leaves the school without a qualification. On average pupils with special educational needs attain six GCSE passes at A*-G grades. All pupils achieve at least a level of functional literacy. Because the school has not yet completed the register of pupils who are deemed gifted and talented, it was not possible to gather evidence about their particular achievement compared to that of their peers. However, the high level results attained by many pupils suggest that their needs are being met in most subjects. Pupils of all ethnic backgrounds achieve very well.

The sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	92.2 (89.9)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	36.2 (32.7)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	307.6 (284.1)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 62 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

13. Overall, results in the sixth form AS and A2-level examinations were well above the national average in 2003. As nationally, female students attained higher results than male students, their results being just below the top twenty-five per cent of all schools nationally. In 2004, results improved further. Students' average point score rose. Whilst the proportion attaining more than 360 points, about 30 per cent, is around average, the proportion attaining over 300 points is above average. Analyses comparing students' results at AS and A2-level to their GCSE scores on entry show that Year 13 in 2004 made the best ever progress achieved in the school. This represents very good achievement.
14. In 2003, results at A2-level were well above national standards in English literature, history, physics and psychology and above average in general studies and geography, but below average in business studies and well below in art and design, drama and sociology. In 2004, well above average results were attained in English language, mathematics, physical education, physics and psychology and above average results in most other subjects. Results at AS-level were also above average overall, well above average in some subjects, including English language and mathematics. Over the last few years, pupils have also been entered for some vocational A-levels (AVCEs). Results in 2004 were broadly in line with those nationally in double award health and social care, but well above average in science and above average in information technology, where most achieved grades A or B.
15. Standards of work seen during the inspection were broadly above average, and well above average in English and design and technology. Achievement, overall, is very good; it is at least good in almost all subjects and very good in English, mathematics, chemistry, physics and geography and excellent in design and technology.
16. Standards seen in English were well above average and both male and female students achieve very well. Particularly impressive are students' individual language studies, which demonstrate very high levels of independent research and study skills, and their personal writing, which shows a very good understanding of adapting language for different audiences. This is also a feature in design and technology, where achievement is high and standards of current work are well above average. Some design portfolios are outstanding. They make significant use of ICT to help convey evaluations of existing products and the developmental points of students' design. Digital images are cleverly used. The best hand sketches and aided drawings have a real designer 'feel' to them and are at undergraduate level. Annotations to design ideas are a particular strength; students' notes reflect their very good thinking skills and considerable research into the project in hand. Strong information

technology skills are also apparent in business studies, where standards are above average and achievement is good. They use them effectively to extend the knowledge needed for the course and to process the knowledge they have already acquired.

17. Standards seen in mathematics were above average and represent very good achievement. Students confidently handle complex concepts with male and female students doing equally well. Achievement in chemistry and physics is very good, whilst that in biology is good. Students begin the vocational course in information technology with relatively modest grades at GCSE, but their capability increases over time to target the higher grades in most cases. This represents good achievement overall and very good for particular students. Groups with similar prior attainment achieve well in the AVCE in health and social care, because they are self-motivated, see the relevance of the course to future career choices and, because of high teacher expectations, work hard. Achievement in humanities and arts subjects is generally good, although in geography progress is very good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their attendance and punctuality are good. These aspects, overall, have improved since the previous inspection and contribute considerably towards pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning. Their attitudes are a strength of the school.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility and enjoy making a contribution to the school.
- Behaviour in most lessons and around the school is very good, although a minority of pupils display challenging behaviour, which can sometimes distract others from learning.
- Attendance and punctuality are good, although the level of unauthorised absence is unacceptably high.
- Relationships between pupils are very good.

Commentary

18. It is clear that the school stimulates in pupils a desire to learn. Many join with quite low confidence and esteem. However, within a comparatively short period of time, the school manages to boost their morale and self-esteem. Consequently most pupils have good attitudes to their learning. Their concentration and interest were, for example, very clearly shown in a Year 9 science lesson, constructing an electric buzzer. There was plenty of friendly competition to see who could make the loudest buzz. Most pupils also display a keenness to participate in one of the schools many extra-curricular clubs. For example, the gymnastics sessions within which several pupils train to be part of local clubs. Pupils are very keen to take responsibility and use their initiative, whether it is as a member of the school council or in producing 'Coolie Milkshakes,' as part of an enterprise project supported by the school meals' supervisor.
19. Relationships between pupils are very good. When interviewed, all ages admitted that the camaraderie of the school meant a lot to them. 'It is nice to come in and see your mates in the morning'. Most pupils are very friendly. They step aside, open doors for you and ask if you are lost. They are proud of their school and its good name. During the whole inspection very little evidence of graffiti, litter or vandalism was witnessed.
20. The school is very good at setting high standards for the pupils' conduct and works very hard to achieve these. Consequently, behaviour is very good and although the school has comparatively high numbers of fixed-term exclusions there has not been a permanent one for six years. Where teaching is very good, behaviour is also very good. However, where teaching is less dynamic a minority of pupils can sometimes spoil things for others. Behaviour

improves as pupils' progress through the school. Although it is good in Years 7-9, it is in some classes in these years mainly that a minority can behave unacceptably. Outside lessons, both within school and in the village, behaviour remains very good. The school has a charter with the local village, 'Village Privilege'. This ensures that the behaviour of the pupils is appreciated and commented upon by the villagers. A variety of alternative strategies to fixed-term exclusions has been used to address unacceptable behaviour. The use of a withdrawal unit has been disbanded in favour of increased provision of learning support assistants. Whilst this valuable resource is having a positive impact on many pupils, the number of fixed-term exclusions remains too high.

21. The attitudes and behaviour of the great majority of pupils with special educational needs are very good. However, there is a small minority of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, who have very low self-esteem, poor concentration, and can distract others from learning. Good use is made of learning assistants to support this minority. Pupils are generally very understanding and supportive of those with special educational needs.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	954	137	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	1	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	17	0	0

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

22. Bullying is now less of a problem than in the past and, overall, pupils' freedom from this, racism and other forms of harassment is good. Through their PSHCE lessons and presentations at assemblies, most pupils admit that they have been given the confidence to report any incidents. All teachers and support staff are well aware of the need to nip potential situations in the bud. The training of sixth form and Year 11 pupils as peer mentors is a new and enterprising initiative to attempt to support more vulnerable pupils. Similarly some sixth form students attached to and on duty at breaks provide support to younger pupils. Awards and sanctions for behaviour are fair and realistic. Pupils appreciate the well-organised systems of commendations and awards evenings, although some feel that awards too rarely go to hard-working pupils of average ability.

Attendance

Attendance and punctuality are good. Attendance is in line with the national average for this type of school and compares well with the previous inspection. The school has good attendance

administration. Most parents are good at ensuring their children attend very punctually and most lessons commence promptly. However, unauthorised absences are well above the national average. In the main these come from a small number of poor attending pupils. The school has adopted a range of strategies to address these, both by making the curriculum more relevant and using the education social work service to address individual issues.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.5	School data	1.4
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

23. Pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness are good. The school has a small, attached agricultural unit which all pupils experience. Many observe the pigs and sheep giving birth and eggs hatching in the specialist incubator. For those who do not come from an agricultural background this can be a spiritual experience, the realisation that there we are all part of some bigger scheme. Religious education lessons have a strong spiritual element, whilst in PSHCE pupils engage with a range of challenging moral issues and in GCSE short course religious education explore moral and ethical dilemmas.
24. Pupils' respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others is very good. Most pupils realise that people have differences, even amongst their own friends. They know that we are often brought up with different values. Year 9, for example, have visited a local old people's home to study a previous generation and what it felt like to live in the 1930s and 40s and through a world war. These experiences have been used to produce effective pieces of drama, where pupils display empathy and understanding of others' values.
25. The school's values and expectations are well known and shared by most pupils. The school's ethos is very strong. Through observation, it is clear that most pupils know right from wrong very well. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Assemblies have a strong moral theme. When asked what the school values, pupils in all years said that 'getting on well together' was important; that 'you should treat others as you wished to be treated yourself.' Significant funds are raised for charities, especially at Christmas, through a variety of activities. The school council is a good example of democracy in action. Pupils' views are valued and are acted upon. The school is a vibrant community, where pupils from a variety of backgrounds get on well together. Older pupils identified this as one of the school's strengths.
26. The local area is very predominantly agricultural and parts of local tradition evolve around village shows and young farmers' groups. Many pupils become involved and, also, the school teaches agriculture, so consequently links with this aspect of local culture are very good. The school encourages pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and those of others. In art, music and drama, traditions from a range of cultures are experienced, although there is currently little dance within the curriculum. Although multi-cultural links are less well developed they are still good. The school does have pupils and teachers from a range of countries, who talk about them and their traditions. In addition, some of the pupils have been to Borneo and lived with local people. Other faiths are studied as part of religious education.

The sixth form

27. There are very positive attitudes to learning in the sixth form and attendance and punctuality are good in both years. Behaviour is also very good throughout and the students are very mature learners with a clear aim and purpose in life. They are a very conscientious and

friendly group with whom to talk. They get on well together and are sensitive to issues of bullying, racism and other forms of harassment, and are keen to support younger pupils who may be experiencing these. Some students have been trained to act as peer counsellors for younger pupils and value the opportunity to address any concerns brought to them. They enjoy responsibility and through their sixth form committee have raised funds and refurbished their own kitchen. They also have representation at all governors' meetings, participate in Young Enterprise, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and The Community Sports Leaders Award. Their moral, social and cultural development is very good. Provision for their spiritual development is only satisfactory. Their assemblies do not have a spiritual element and religious education is limited. However, sixth formers exhibit very positive attitudes and are a credit to the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching, learning and assessment are very good. The breadth of the curriculum is good, with a good balance of academic and vocational courses offered from Year 10. Opportunities for enrichment are good, as are participation in sport and the arts. Accommodation is good, and improving. Learning resources are satisfactory. Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is excellent, whilst support, advice and guidance are very good. The involvement of pupils is very good overall and excellent in the sixth form. Links with parents are good, whilst those with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good.

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. This is because teaching and learning are rarely unsatisfactory and are good or better in the vast majority of lessons. Evidence from lesson observations shows that most of the characteristics of teaching and learning are very effective and result in pupils' very good achievement. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection, where it was judged to be good overall, but only satisfactory in Years 7-9. The quality of assessment is very good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is mostly good or better, and rarely unsatisfactory. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Outstanding teaching was observed in a range of subjects, very good in all others.
- Teachers engage very well with pupils and give them encouragement. Enjoyment is a strong feature of learning across the curriculum.
- Teaching and learning in design and technology are excellent.
- Teachers use a variety of effective teaching strategies and stimulating activities, which encourage pupils to collaborate, discuss and question.
- Assessment across the whole school is very good. Target setting is well developed, although, as yet, form tutors are rarely involved in it.
- The use of ICT for learning in subjects across the curriculum is underdeveloped.
- The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- Grouping by ability and teaching mixed ability groups are used very effectively to promote equality of opportunity, but arrangements in some subjects result in some classes being difficult to engage fully.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 167 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14 (8%)	63 (38%)	65 (39%)	22 (13%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

28. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. It is the amalgam of good, very good and outstanding experiences in lessons, which makes it so. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Then 57 per cent of teaching was judged to be good or better; now it is 85 per cent. Unsatisfactory teaching is now rare. This exemplifies the success of the school's focus in its development planning on raising achievement through improving the quality of teaching and learning. Outstanding teaching was seen in design and technology, physical education, PSHCE, music, English and mathematics. Overall, in Years 7-11, the quality of teaching is excellent in design and technology and very good in mathematics, science, history, music, physical education, religious education and PSHCE.
29. Teachers' command of their subjects is very good. Many have excellent up-to-date subject knowledge. Teachers of French and German have good language skills and most use them to good effect in lessons. Teachers' planning is generally very effective, especially with older pupils. In most lessons, the learning objectives are clearly communicated at the start and reinforced at the end. In the earlier years, some teachers plan insufficiently for the range of abilities within a class. For example, sometimes, in English, the teacher is too reliant on a textbook and does not adapt tasks sufficiently for the differing needs of pupils. However, generally teachers' expectations are high, providing very good challenge to pupils. In German, for example, pupils respond very well to challenging teaching, which allows for no lapse in concentration. Similarly, in science, the level of difficulty and pace of lessons are well judged and give pupils the confidence to persevere with tasks that they find hard.
30. Most teachers engage very well with pupils and give them appropriate encouragement. Pupils identified this as one of the strengths of the school. In science, for example, excellent relationships with pupils of all levels of attainment are resulting in a proper climate for learning. Here, pupils trust and respect their teachers and behaviour is uniformly very good. Most teachers employ a range of strategies effectively for establishing positive behaviour. However, grouping arrangements in some subjects result in some classes being difficult to engage fully, although with skilled teaching even the most difficult pupils often do so.
31. Teachers use a very good range of teaching methods and activities. There is often a good variety of tasks, activities and groupings, so that pupils are interested and work purposefully. In English, for example, lively starter activities are used very effectively to focus the pupils' attention and to reinforce previous learning. Often these take the form of a game or competition. Similarly, in music, starter activities are innovative and exciting, immediately engaging pupils' interest and building on prior knowledge. These are often linked to cross-curricular themes, such as the history of music with major events of world history. In the best art lessons, introductions are lively, and pupils are involved in demonstrations. This creates very high levels of interest, pupils are keen to take part, and they become absorbed in the lesson. This produces very good learning. Some of the activities in religious education, such as the use of religious artefacts, are very imaginative and they help the pupils concentrate on their work. Pupils' willingness to contribute to question and answer sessions is a strong feature of lessons in all subjects. In geography, the use of local examples, where appropriate, helps give a sense of reality to work. Teaching in history, for example, is characterised throughout by innovative, pupil-centred techniques that are used to gain or sustain pupils' interest. Teaching in physical education uses excellent literacy strategies to help pupils learn technical words and concepts.
32. Teachers generally use resources and time very effectively. They often give tight time targets and lessons proceed at a good pace. Expectations in German are very high and efficient planning ensures that the limited time is used to best effect. Whilst a variety of resources are used, the use of ICT is very erratic. There is no use to enhance learning in languages and use in English and history, for example, is too limited. Even in mathematics, it is limited by the amount of equipment available, although where an interactive whiteboard is in place, it is

used expertly and lessons proceed with noticeable pace. However, ICT is used extensively in design and technology and teaching in PSHCE, which is characterised by meticulous planning and innovative 'hooks' to capture pupils' attention, makes extensive use of 'whiteboard' technology.

33. Homework is used with increasing effectiveness to reinforce and extend pupils' learning as they move through the school. In mathematics, it is set frequently with activities, which extend and challenge pupils, building upon work covered in class. In drama, pupils develop their work and reinforce understanding by writing up practical tasks for homework and older pupils thoroughly research the background to their creative work. Most parents and pupils indicated that homework set is manageable, although varies between years. Whilst it increases as pupils move through the school, most older pupils display a mature attitude to handling the pressures and recognise that time spent should be kept within sensible parameters, ensuring they have time for a good social life as well.
34. The school has an excellent commitment to inclusion. A mix of grouping by ability and teaching mixed ability groups is used very effectively to promote equality of opportunity. However, grouping arrangements in some subjects can result in pupils of average or below average ability being adversely affected by too many of the small minority of disaffected pupils being placed in the same class.
35. As pupils move through the school, they acquire skills, knowledge and understanding with growing confidence. Most science lessons are enriched by practical work using high quality resources. Experiments are chosen which challenge pupils, who, very well supported by teachers and teaching assistants, work enthusiastically and make significant gains in understanding and practical skills. Enjoyment is a strong feature of lessons across the curriculum. For example, learning in history is challenging but fun and pupils respond very positively to the opportunities offered. A set of 'finger puppets' was used in a lesson to enact negotiations leading to Hitler's assumption of the German Chancellorship in 1933.
36. Pupils' application and productivity is very good, as is their capacity to work independently and collaboratively. In mathematics lessons, for example, pupils are interested in their work. This is reflected in the way that they ask and answer questions, and their general participation in the lessons. When given the opportunity, pupils work well in small groups and help each other understand the complexities of mathematics, for example. They talk willingly about the subject and are able to explain their work clearly. In ICT, in Years 10 and 11, course handouts and guides are of very good quality and help pupils to work at their own pace. Individual pupil guidance is a strong feature of all ICT lessons, which promotes individual achievement. Pupils work independently and with confidence, demonstrating the fluent application of ICT skills. In drama, pupils enjoy rehearsing and performing. They listen attentively and enthusiastically when others are speaking or performing, so that they can evaluate each other's work. They also work well together in group activities in many subjects and are caring and supportive of the less able pupils, encouraging them to participate and enabling them to gain in confidence. However, in a small number of lessons across the curriculum, pupils do not listen carefully enough, and they begin to chat, and work without concentrating as hard as they could. Learning is less good in these lessons as a result.
37. Whilst teaching and learning across the school are very good, in design and technology they are excellent. Here, pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour are fostered and encouraged by dedicated teachers. Many pupils say they love this subject and get on really well. If they fall a little behind, they have to do more work in lunchtimes and they willingly do so. They are proud of the high quality products they make. All teachers are at least very effective. All are very knowledgeable, very hard-working, and very effectively plan, organise, evaluate and assess their own teaching, each other's teaching, and pupils' learning. It is a unique team, which is a credit to them and to the subject team leader.
38. The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs, both within classes and in small withdrawal groups, are very good. There is very good literacy and numeracy support in small, discrete withdrawal groups in Years 7-9 where teaching is matched closely to individual needs and pupils can evaluate their own progress. Teaching assistants provide very good support in class to individuals and smaller groups that enable pupils to learn as well as others. Unusually, an excellent example of this support was observed in a physical education lesson.

39. Assessment in the school is very good. This shows good improvement since the last inspection. The school has made a special effort over the last year to make assessment a focus of development. Recently, there has been whole school training on the use of assessment. As part of this development, the school has used assessment data to produce targets for all the pupils. These targets are agreed with pupils and discussed with parents at parents' evenings. They are reviewed on a regular basis in the light of the testing which takes place, normally at least every half term. Pupils who fail to achieve their targets are identified through subject leaders and pastoral year heads and time is spent to help them rectify this. However, as yet, form tutors are not fully involved with monitoring pupils' progress towards their targets.
40. Many departments monitor pupils by means of a centrally held tracking system. All teachers now have a laptop computer, which connects to the school database, and this allows them to have an up-to-date record of prior attainment and target grades. That used in the mathematics department automatically identifies pupils who are failing to achieve their targets, and allows the department to provide work, which can rectify this problem.
41. Day-to-day marking is very good, as is the use of praise to motivate pupils and assist them in their learning. A variety of marking systems are used, but they are understood by pupils. Not all marking is linked to National Curriculum levels but the targets, which are set, are automatically linked to those levels. Pupils' involvement with the setting of targets, and their discussions after each assessment, means that they have a good understanding of their performance at any given time. The setting of new targets also allows them to understand ways in which they can improve.
42. Although practice is often very good, the school has correctly identified the embedding of the use of assessment for learning as an area for further development. However, there are good examples across the school. In English, for example, pupils are given very clear criteria for success and are encouraged to evaluate their own work. Similarly, in a Year 7 rugby lesson, pupils made excellent progress because assessments were used to distinguish the difficulty of work and the challenge to pupils at different levels.

The sixth form

43. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is also very good. In lessons seen, it was rarely less than good. The quality of teaching is excellent in design and technology and very good in English, mathematics, sciences, business studies, physical education, geography, history, health and social care. Across the curriculum, students are well organised, keen, responsible and mature in their outlook and dedicated in their attitudes to learning.
44. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects. For example, in biology, excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm are engendering abiding interest in students. Very good relationships between teachers and students and amongst the students themselves add much to learning. In business studies, teachers are confident in the subject matter and so learning is clear and the students cover a lot of ground in the time available.
45. A very good range of teaching and learning strategies is used. In English language, students are provided with a stimulating variety of examples of language use. They are very well prepared with frameworks for discussion and given very helpful notes on background and context, for example on the historical development of language. In mathematics, teachers encourage students to learn by asking probing, open-ended questions, which give them a greater depth of understanding of the topic being studied. In design and technology, expectations of students are very high; both of standards of work and through demanding workloads.

46. In biology, increasingly adventurous and stimulating teaching methodology is leading to more independent and active learning. Group work gives students opportunities to discuss concepts. This helps them to clarify their ideas and to recognise any weaknesses in learning. Students in English also benefit considerably from individual tutorials to support their chosen language studies. However, this is extremely demanding on teachers as class sizes increase. In geography, the use of well-resourced case studies brings reality to lessons. In psychology, good links are made between substantive topics studied and the teacher provides very useful resource materials that help students cross-reference these areas. Teaching in business studies makes good use of information technology as an aid to learning.
47. Some teaching groups are now very large and are sometimes taught in fairly cramped conditions or teachers have to move them to non-specialist rooms. This is having an adverse affect on the quality of teaching and learning. In design and technology, for example, students enjoy more discussion with staff about their work than they perhaps had when younger though increasing class sizes shortens the time available to individuals in lessons. However, all staff put themselves out to provide support to students outside of lessons if they need it.
48. Across the curriculum, students rise to teachers' high expectations of them and are happy to accept responsibility for much of their learning. However, occasionally in English and business studies, for example, more could be done to encourage a wider range of students to participate in the lessons as at times just a few students predominate. In psychology, students are rarely expected to present their research findings at their next lessons and too many display a lack of ability or reluctance to discuss theoretical studies further. In these lessons, though teaching is good, too much is done for students, rather than placing the onus on them to learn. Teaching is better when, for example, small groups of students are expected to complete mini-research topics and present their findings. In health and social care, for example, students researched the requirements of individuals with diet-related disorders, consolidating their learning and developing their communication skills and their ability to select and synthesise information for a presentation to give to the whole group.
49. Students enjoy their lessons and are prepared to talk about their subjects with enthusiasm. In mathematics, for example, lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of good humour and solid, hard work. Perceptive questions from students indicate good understanding of the lessons. Students are kind to each other and are prepared to offer each other assistance if required. In ICT, students have a good approach to researching a subject. They use the Internet effectively as a resource and use sources to assemble work that answers set questions with illustrative detail. In health and social care, students' personal development is secured through the very effective promotion of independent learning, especially through work placements.
50. Assessment in Years 12 and 13 is good. Teachers know the level at which their students enter their course and are able to set targets accordingly. Students' work is assessed on a regular basis and their targets are reviewed in a way that ensures that their progress is optimised. Marking of work is, in many instances, detailed, informative and gives guidance on how to improve. Where appropriate, targets are discussed with students and new ones are agreed. Recently the school has bought into a national scheme, which provides value-added information on the performance of students and departments. This will enhance the school's currently very good analyses of performance. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is good in all years. A good balance of academic and vocational courses is offered from Year 10 and in the sixth form. Whilst the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met, those in respect of a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form are not. Opportunities for enrichment are good, as are participation in sport and the arts. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good, although provision of

technician support is somewhat limited in some areas. Accommodation is good, although that for the sixth form is only satisfactory. Learning resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils experience a broad academic curriculum, with good provision for vocational courses from Year 10.
- The award of business and enterprise college status is encouraging curriculum development, but that of work-related learning is only at an early stage.
- The sixth form curriculum offers a very broad range of academic and vocational courses in partnership with Morton School. However, there are insufficient courses below advanced level.
- ICT across the curriculum is generally underdeveloped, although there are some notable exceptions, such as its use in design and technology.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good in all years, but that for gifted and talented pupils is only now beginning to be addressed consistently.
- Some aspects of curricular organisation, such as option arrangements and pupil groupings, are not consistently supporting the school's strong commitment to the inclusion of all pupils.
- Provision for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities, including sports and the arts, is good, although enrichment opportunities for the sixth form are underdeveloped.
- Staffing is good. Recruitment and retention of teachers are good. Provision of learning support assistants is very good.
- Accommodation is good. The school has been active in seeking funding for new building and refurbishments.

Commentary

51. The breadth of curricular opportunities offered to pupils in all years is good. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7-9 includes the full range of core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, as well as drama and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). From Year 8, the two top ability groups in languages are taught German as well as French. All these courses lead to a GCSE qualification at the end of Year 11. The curriculum is taught in 25 one-hour periods. This results in some anomalies in time allocations to subjects, with a recent reduction in the time given to design and technology in Year 9. This limits pupils' experience of some aspects of design and technology prior to their option choice, and could result in a lowering of standards in an area, which currently achieves excellence.
52. The school has introduced some flexibility into the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. All pupils follow examination courses in English language and literature, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education and non-examination courses in PSHCE and physical education. In science, pupils have the choice of a double award course or a package of single award science and a GCSE in agriculture. This distinctive course meets the needs well of about a sixth of pupils each year. In addition pupils choose from a broad range of academic and vocational courses. In the current Year 10, these include vocational courses in construction, in conjunction with a further education college, and health and social care. A course offered in leisure and tourism failed to recruit. It is intended to offer a vocational business studies course next year as an alternative. In addition to National Curriculum subjects, there are options in drama and business studies. Each year a small group of pupils follow a pre-vocational course instead of the four options. This meets their needs well. In design technology, courses in systems, graphics, food technology, textiles and resistant materials are offered. Whilst textiles has regularly failed to recruit sufficient numbers to run, rather inept option planning for the current Year 10 has resulted in resistant materials, an extremely successful subject, failing to recruit sufficient pupils. The balance of vocational and academic courses is good.

53. Whilst provision for ICT is good, particularly as a discrete subject, ICT across the curriculum is generally underdeveloped. There are good examples within some subjects, notably within design and technology, which is a model of good practice in this respect. Significant missed opportunities to make learning more effective using the medium of ICT were noted in English, modern languages and music, for example. With levels of ICT capability increasing there is much scope to expect a greater impact of ICT use upon pupils' achievements across their subjects. The national strategy in ICT has had an impact on raising standards in Years 7 and 8.
54. There is good provision for music, drama and art, which has resulted in good-sized groups opting for the subjects this year. Smaller option groups are accepted in some years to ensure the needs of pupils with artistic interests are met. A good range of instrumental tuition is offered and is subsidised by the school. However, there is little provision for dance within the curriculum, other than occasional sessions in physical education. There is good provision for physical education, with a large group choosing it as an option subject in addition to their compulsory lessons.
55. Provision for languages has altered significantly from that in previous years. The successful results achieved in both French and German in 2003, for example, were based upon year groups where half had studied French, half German, as their first foreign language in Years 7-9. In Years 8 and 9, as now, the top two ability groups studied a second language and in Years 10 and 11 almost all studied at least one language. The consequence of French becoming the first language for all and languages being optional from Year 10 has been a striking decline in uptake, particularly in German. Less than a quarter of the current Year 10 study a language, and only a third of these are studying German. Given the consistent high standard of German results, this could impact negatively on standards overall, and may narrow access to some careers for some pupils.
56. In all years, the choice of grouping arrangements is left to departments, within the constraints of the timetable. Science, for example, has chosen to teach mixed ability groups, very successfully, whilst most other subjects adopt some arrangement of grouping by ability from Year 8, languages from Year 7. It is part of the school's curriculum philosophy, that departments should be free to group pupils as they wish in order to achieve the best results. This has given rise to some innovative experiments, such as successful single-sex groupings in history in Year 10 and mixing of the two middle ability groups in English. Observations suggest that whilst some grouping by ability is very successful, as in mathematics, it is not universally so. It places some unnecessary constraints on the timetable. It can also restrict access to the full curriculum for some pupils, when, for example, a subject is grouped by ability in Years 7-9, but through option choice has to teach mixed ability in Years 10-11. Whilst the leadership team recognise that grouping should be by potential ability rather than by attainment, observations suggest that this is not always the case. Consequently some lower ability groups, particularly the third of four groups, can end up with a disproportionate number of less motivated pupils, resulting in poor experiences for others in these groups.
57. The award of business and enterprise college status is encouraging a range of curriculum development, both within the school day and in extra-curricular activities. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 were observed participating in an innovative 'key skills at work' seminar as part of a 'business dynamics' programme run by CITB for pupils at Caldew and a special school. Although the development of work-related learning is at an early stage, the school offers its pupils a wide range of experiences that make a significant contribution to their learning.
58. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good. At the time of the last inspection, it was delivered by non-specialists as part of a 'shared timetable space' with religious education. This arrangement was seen to work to the detriment of religious education and was strongly criticised. In response, the school decided to enhance PSHE to the status of a timetabled curriculum subject, incorporating citizenship, taught by a specialist team of teachers in Years 8, 9 and 11. Crucial to this was the appointment of the current co-ordinator, who is an outstanding subject leader and an advanced skills teacher.

Consequently, provision is unrecognisable from that described in the last report. In Year 7, the subject is taught as part of a tutorial period, whilst in Year 10, pupils receive a number of conferences, rather than weekly periods. Programmes of study are now in place across all years. They are supported by a range of purpose-made resources and an ongoing record of pupils' achievement. Within PSHCE, arrangements for both drugs and sex and relationships education are very good. Preparation for the next stage of education and employment are good. Careers education and work experience are firmly embedded within the PSHCE programme.

59. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good in all years. Because there are very effective support and intervention strategies for literacy and numeracy, pupils with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum. There is good planning for differing needs in most subjects. Pupils benefit from the support of well-qualified teaching assistants. The preparation and use of resources to aid the learning of special needs pupils, such as spelling programmes and appropriate reading materials, are very good. Because alternative courses and accreditation are offered, and pupils are supported very well with their GCSE coursework, no pupil leaves the school without a qualification. There is very good support for pupils beyond lessons by teaching assistants who act as named workers. They provide additional support at breaks, lunchtimes and after school and run clubs. Because of very good behaviour and inclusion policies, some disaffected pupils or pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are kept in lessons and encouraged to attend school regularly.
60. The school has only recently responded to the national requirement to identify and ensure appropriate provision for gifted and talented pupils. They have, however, now moved quickly and very effectively. There is a well-written and comprehensive policy. Presently, pupils are being identified by all departments and a register is being collated. Detailed action plans for each subject are being drawn up to focus on the special needs of such pupils. There are also whole school initiatives. For example, pupils are being encouraged to join the National Association for Gifted and Talented Youth. At all stages, parents are being actively involved and the feeder primary schools are helping to identify these pupils. Whilst in the past there has not been a formal system to monitor the provision for the gifted and talented, the school has always recognised and supported such pupils.
61. The school makes good support for learning outside of the school day. There is a good range of activities at lunchtime and a few after school. Access to the latter is restricted for many because they have to catch the school bus. However, pupils attend some sporting activities, play rehearsals and orchestras and are supported by lifts from parents and friends in order to do so. Pupils' participation in sport, such as football, netball, hockey, gymnastics, basketball and table tennis, is good and competitive teams exist in many sports. Pupils train hard in gymnastics to join local teams and teams are gradually being formed for competitive table tennis. However, a strength of such sporting activities is that they are open to all abilities, not just those aiming at teams.
62. Participation in the arts and other activities are also good. After school rehearsals, twice weekly for the school play *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, are very keenly attended, whilst musical examinations are trained for all year and an orchestra practises regularly. Where possible, pupils are taken to the theatre. GCSE pupils have been to Newcastle Theatre Royal to see *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* and also to Blackpool for *Blood Brothers*, whilst others have visited Keswick Theatre by the Lake to see *Sailor Beware*. A variety of other trips form part of the curriculum in geography and history, for example. The gardening club is very popular and meets every lunchtime. However, during the inspection the modern languages (Europa Club) and the History Society were not well attended. Participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is supported by parents. There is a good range of school journeys, for example skiing and to France.
63. Staffing and accommodation are good overall; resources are satisfactory. The school has worked effectively to recruit and retain well-qualified teaching and support staff. There is good recruitment and very good retention; this is a very good school in a very pleasant area in

which to live. There are a good number of support assistants for pupils with special educational needs and they are well trained. Technical support is more limited. For example, the number of science technicians is low and none employed during the holidays, despite the presence of an agricultural unit on site. A good feature of technical support in design technology is staff development; the technician will become a 'new model' classroom assistant, helping teachers more broadly than at present in the classroom.

64. Although satisfactory overall, general resources are more often than not good and there are plenty of books, for example. However, though the number of computers per pupil slightly exceeds the national average their distribution and use hinders some departments from making much use of them, for example in science, music, and geography. Science urgently needs up-to-date computers and ancillary equipment, which pupils can use alongside experiments. Even very good provision in design and technology is short of computer assisted machining and other peripherals. A number of whiteboards have been made available under a national initiative and the use of these is starting to influence teaching in several subjects. This is particularly so in mathematics, where they are used in an interactive manner. Every teacher has the use of a laptop computer. Whilst some are making excellent use of these to produce stimulating lessons using interactive whiteboards, many are not using the laptops effectively except as an administrative tool for registration.
65. Accommodation ranges from the excellent provision made for a substantial part of design and technology to the unsatisfactory provision for food technology, particularly catering. Almost all other subjects enjoy good accommodation, although a few classrooms are cramped. Substantial building work has been undertaken in recent years. Management, governors and the leadership group, have been very effective in obtaining the resources for new build and refurbishments. However, catering does not have the appropriate furniture and equipment to emulate commercial practice nor ICT projection equipment so commercial premises cannot be researched and explored on site. Though accommodation for physical education is good overall and some features very good, there is no room base for the substantial theoretical aspects of GCSE. The farm is an almost unique feature of the school's accommodation and contributes very significantly to appropriate vocational and work-related learning as well as forming a focus for social and moral development and a haven for a particular group of pupils. New build, as part of becoming a business and enterprise college, will enhance access to ICT resources.
66. The library has a good stock of books, which is reviewed annually and there are 17 computer workstations, rather few for this size of school. Audio-visual aids such as videos and CDROMS are plentiful but there is nothing in DVD format. A full-time librarian ensures good management of stock and fruitful links with the school library service.

The sixth form

67. The breadth of the sixth form curriculum is good, although within Caldew most courses are at advanced level and cater mainly for those interested in higher education. Currently the only intermediate level course offered is in retail and distribution. However, a good range of AVCE courses are offered in health and social care, leisure and tourism, science, ICT and business. A very broad range of AS and A2-level courses is offered. In part, this has been made possible though the development of a partnership with Morton School. Consequently, some subjects, such as sociology, which might otherwise have failed to recruit sufficient numbers, have viable groups. Indeed, in some other subjects, it has led to groups which are too large. Good arrangements are also made with other institutions where appropriate. For example, students attend the Cumbria Institute of the Arts for both theatre and film studies. The drama teacher from Caldew is teaching part of the former at the Institute. Languages are taught in collaboration with St Aidan's.
68. In addition to studying four AS-level and three A2-level courses, most students study general studies to either AS or A2-level. This is an example of good practice. Students hold very mixed views about this. Some resent having to take a subject that may not count towards university entry, others recognise the benefits of the course in preparing them for university

and employment. Religious education is taught through general studies and some conferences. Visitors from a Bible college were observed leading a successful session on the existence of God. However, overall, provision for religious education in the sixth form is not fully satisfying the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus.

69. All main school extra-curricular clubs are open to sixth form students, but they did state at interview that they would prefer to have more of their own. The sixth form has an excellent record of success in the Young Enterprise scheme. They have been county champions twice in the last four years. They have a good programme of trips and participate in an annual youth convention in France. However, the school has recognised that provision for enrichment in the sixth form requires further development.
70. Staffing and resources are good in the sixth form; accommodation is satisfactory. ICT provision is better in the sixth form than in the main school because students can access computers easily, either utilising spare ones generally round the school or using computers dedicated to their use. Accommodation is only satisfactory in the sixth form because some subjects have no base, for example psychology, and others too little space, for example health and social care. Some subjects have obviously expanded in popularity faster than their accommodation needs can be addressed. The new building shortly coming will address some accommodation issues but not all. Governors are adept at prioritising budgets and developing site plans so other accommodation will likely follow.

Care, guidance and support

Provision to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is excellent. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is very good. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their advice is very good overall and excellent in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective pastoral systems provide excellent support for the personal development of pupils.
- The induction arrangements help Year 7 pupils and sixth form students settle in very well.
- Pupils are involved extremely well in the life of the school and make a valuable impact on its work.
- Tutorial time is inconsistently used for productive purposes.
- Guidance and support for career opportunities are satisfactory but are inconsistently applied because of limited curriculum time in Year 10.
- Pupils' academic progress is monitored very well in the school but, as yet, form tutors are not systematically tracking progress and offering advice on a regular basis.

Commentary

71. The school is a very caring institution and pays excellent attention to all aspects of the physical care and well-being of all its pupils. A major reason for this is the very effective pastoral systems which enable staff to work very closely developing an excellent understanding of pupils' individual circumstances and needs. As a consequence, the extent to which each pupil has a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school is excellent. There is a very strong philosophy of inclusion with all pupils valued equally. In recent years, practices have been developed to support vulnerable pupils and their progress is well monitored. This ensures that prompt actions are taken to help pupils who may be experiencing difficulties that affect their learning or well-being. Pupils talk very positively about the mentoring systems that support them during their time at school. They particularly value the buddy system that enables older pupils to support new pupils with relevant and practical advice. Also valued is the work of teachers and support assistants who mentor the work of identified groups of pupils to establish further trusting and confidential relationships.

72. Students are regularly asked for their views and opinions on the school's work. They make a substantial contribution to the life of the school through the school council, peer mentoring and mediation and through carrying out duties around the school. These are genuine voices and highly regarded by the school. The majority of pupils feel that they have their views acted on with outcomes, such as improved toilets and changing facilities. Although pupils talk of behavioural issues, including bullying, they believe behaviour management is effective and that there are many adults who effectively and sensitively deal with such issues. Inspectors agree with this. They also talk positively about the very good arrangements to help them settle in on arrival to the school. Arrangements such as summer schools and organised trips significantly help these bonding processes.
73. Health and safety issues are managed very effectively, including child protection procedures that are handled very well. There are formal procedures to ensure a regular monitoring of health and safety issues, including a weekly tour of the school, a pupil reporting system and very good subject risk assessments. Multi-disciplinary meetings involve a range of support agencies that result in very high quality care to support pupils and families. Careers education and advice are satisfactory although the co-ordinated programme has inconsistencies in delivery, especially in Year 10, when there are only sporadic inputs, as there is no timetabled PSHCE in this year.
74. The support, advice and guidance provided for pupils with special educational needs are very good. The quality of pupils' individual education plans is very good. They are reviewed every term and pupils are fully involved in the process. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are involved in the negotiation of their own targets. There are very good induction arrangements for special needs pupils. They all know which teaching assistant will support them when they begin in Year 7. There is also very good liaison through the careers service and further education colleges to ensure a smooth transition for them to the next stage of their education, or work.
75. Form tutors are an integral link in supporting personal and academic monitoring. Tracking data to support learning and to set targets is well established within departments and, through heads of year and members of the leadership group, across subjects. The communication systems in the year teams are very effective in logging behavioural concerns and sanctions. The school is aware of the need to formulate further involvement of form tutors in the academic monitoring of pupils. New arrangements for reporting and interviews with parents are a successful beginning to this new policy. The use of tutorial time as a means of supported learning is inconsistently applied. This ranges from good communication on issues for pupils to a more social time with little planned input by teachers.

The sixth form

76. Provision for care and support in the sixth form is very good. Students feel that they are well consulted on issues regarding the school and that their input is effective. There is a standing invitation to the head boy and head girl to attend governors' meetings. The school's involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is excellent. Sixth form students also play a role in supporting younger pupils within the school. Some have been trained as peer mentors to support pupils who have concerns, including those who may be being bullied.
77. Students also feel that they have been given good guidance on course selection. However, the school recognises a need to further develop school-university links to enhance the information on further study. A significant number of students indicated on their questionnaires that there was a lack of adult staff they could confide in. However, during the inspection they talked highly of the advice they had been given. There is an effective system of monitoring students' progress and setting targets.
78. Induction to the sixth form is very good and there is an inclusive approach with an increasing number of students from other schools studying at Caldew as part of the joint post-16 provision. There are mixed practices regarding the tutor period in the morning. Some tutors

use the time effectively to better inform guidance and pastoral care whilst in other situations students simply register and do not make the best use of this time.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with its community and other schools and colleges. These have improved since the previous inspection. Links with parents are still good. Partnership with parents and the community contributes significantly towards the success of the pupils' learning. The school has begun to make effective use of its business and enterprise status to strengthen partnerships.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most parents have very positive views of the school.
- Links with the community are very good and support the curriculum.
- There are very good links with other schools and colleges, particularly in the sixth form, where the partnership with Morton School and other institutions has strengthened the curriculum offer.
- The provision to parents of information about the school and their children's standards and progress is very good.

Commentary

79. From talking to parents, and from comments on their returned questionnaires, most believe that Caldew is a good school. In particular, they say that their child likes school and is expected to work hard, that teaching is good and their child is progressing well. They also think that the settling in period in Year 7 is also good. Inspection reveals these aspects to be true. However, a significant minority of parents said that they are not kept well informed of their child's progress and do not think that behaviour is very good. The inspection has found that parents do now receive plenty of concise information on pupils' progress and behaviour is generally very good.
80. The school provides its parents with very good information. Each family receives an up-to-date prospectus and governors' report. The prospectus contains all statutory requirements but the governors' report has one minor omission, which the school is addressing. Annual pupil reports comment on all subjects being taken, they are clear and concise, say what a child can do and state realistic targets. In addition, parents receive regular, informative newsletters and there are well-attended meetings to discuss reports and progress. These meetings and reports are sensibly placed part of the way through the school year, so that pupils have time to address targets that are set. There is a regular 'drop in' facility for all parents and a school website. However, the school has a wide and disparate catchment area and, consequently, some parents have little regular contact with the school. Strategies to address this, such as improving use of the school website are being developed. However, the school has the confidence of all the communities it serves.
81. The school seeks the views of parents well by sending out regular questionnaires. Consequently, parents have influenced a change in the format of parents' evenings and become involved with local artists decorating a new walkway, 'The Street'. Their views inform the school's development plan.
82. The school has an energetic parent-teacher association, which has raised money for agricultural poly-tunnels, table tennis and rugby resources, for example. The contribution that parents make to their children's education is satisfactory. One mother, for example, comes in and takes extra-curricular gymnastics whilst others are currently making holly wreaths and other Christmas crafts for the Young Enterprise scheme. At home, parents appreciate the home/school diaries and help with projects and topics where they can. Many accompany pupil trips and school teams and are well appreciated by the school for doing so.

83. There is very good communication with parents of pupils with special educational needs by the coordinator, teachers and support assistants. Pupils' individual education plans are shared with parents and carers. There is also very good work in partnership with other schools and colleges. Two teaching assistants being trained to support reading intervention and autistic spectrum disorders will share their expertise with local primary schools. The "Learning Challenge," for pupils who are disaffected, is supported by teaching assistants, sixth form students and students from St Martin's College. There are very good links with primary schools and FE colleges for the transfer of information and expertise in supporting pupils with special educational needs. There is also very good liaison with specialist teaching services and other support agencies.
84. The school has numerous, beneficial links with the community. There are lots of work experience placement firms and, being a member of the Education Business Partnership, the school has further links with CITB. A local accounts firm sponsors computers and Carlisle Football Club has a computer link with the school. Pupils attend services at the local church and through the religious education department have visited a Buddhist Centre in the lake-district. Every Christmas pupils go street busking to raise money for Crisis at Christmas and the local young farmers use the school for many of their functions and meetings. A very welcome visitor to the school is the local community policeman, who contributes regularly to the personal and social education of the pupils. Excellent links have been developed with a hotel for pupils on a catering course in Years 10 and 11.
85. The school is in its second year as a business and enterprise college. It has begun to develop initiatives identified in its bid. Within some subjects, such as design and technology, there is a range of initiatives, but in others development has been more limited.
86. Caldew is part of a cluster of local schools, which share professional and academic expertise. For example, the physical education co-ordinator visits local primary schools, identifies areas for development and helps to improve performance. Year 6 pupils are invited in to sample, for example, more sophisticated science techniques and the ICT and PSHCE departments also have similar productive links. The school also advises others on launching the Young Enterprise scheme. There are also good links with a local special school. There is a wide range of sporting links. Trainee teachers are regularly welcomed into the school from St Martin's College.

The sixth form

87. Students in the sixth form benefit from very good community links. In addition to those in the main school, there are educational links with universities and other institutions, such as the Cumberland Infirmary. Students on the health and social care course have regular inputs from a variety of visiting speakers. Transfer to higher and further education is very well prepared for, by support in writing CVs, applications and mock job and careers interviews.
88. There are very good links with other schools and colleges. Partnership with Morton School has increased the range of subjects taught in the sixth form and group sizes. Whilst this is a relatively new venture, most courses are working well. Some other subjects are taught at the Cumbria Institute of the Arts and, where appropriate, students join other schools, for example, for languages.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good, overall. Leadership of the headteacher is very good, and other staff with responsibilities lead their areas very well. Very good management ensures that the school runs very smoothly. Governors are very effective in the support they give and are highly involved in planning for the future. Governance is very good, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is led very effectively; the headteacher and senior and middle managers are very effective. They create a strong climate for learning where pupils can achieve very well.
- The commitment of all to inclusion and concern for the needs of individuals is excellent.
- The leadership team is committed and enthusiastic, and has secured very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Self-evaluation is honest and rigorous at all levels.
- Data analysis is used very effectively to examine strengths and weaknesses in subjects, and to challenge middle managers to achieve very well for the students.
- Governors are highly effective in supporting and shaping the work of the school, but have not ensured that requirements are met for daily worship.
- The business and enterprise culture is not yet fully embedded in the work of subject departments.

Commentary

89. Governors are dedicated and are heavily involved in shaping the work of the school. They are enthusiastic and ambitious, and want the school to achieve the very highest standards in its work. The committees work very effectively and provide excellent challenge to senior managers. All statutory requirements are met, except in relation to the daily act of collective worship. Governors have debated fully the issue of delivering collective worship and have a clear programme of year assemblies. Accommodation is not available for full school assemblies. Governors have a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and many have, or have had, children at the school. They have been fully involved in the successful bid to become a specialist college. Governors monitor and help set the direction for expenditure very well, and help to ensure that financial management is very good.
90. Leadership at all levels is very good. The very clear vision of the headteacher, and the enthusiasm and commitment of senior managers ensures that there is a clear focus on pupils' achievements and improving the quality of teaching and learning. This approach has created a very strong climate for learning, where pupils can achieve very well. There is an excellent commitment of all to inclusion, promotion of equality and concern for the needs of individuals. This is seen in the excellent arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils. Senior managers work very effectively as a team, with strengths and areas of expertise that complement each other. In addition, senior managers are strong role models, often visiting classrooms. They will also regularly visit classes on teachers' requests, helping to ensure that lessons run well. Currently, the senior leadership group is all male. However, plans are in hand to extend membership and include female role models.
91. Many other key staff, including heads of year and heads of subject departments, also provide very good leadership, and have established very successful teams. These teams are encouraged to be forward looking and innovative, and are constantly seeking ways to improve aspects of the work of departments, for example, by looking closely at assessment practice, and trying to refine its use. In design and technology, leadership is excellent, and has secured excellent teaching and learning, and excellent achievement for students in this subject.
92. The school is very well managed. Self-evaluation at all levels, including that of senior managers themselves, is honest and very rigorous. The work of individual subject departments is regularly reviewed, and takes into account a wide range of evidence. This includes rigorous analysis of results in tests and examinations, the quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' achievement. Conclusions are sharp, and challenging targets are set. This approach has been very successful in helping to achieve very good teaching and learning overall in the school.

93. Planning is very good. A very well structured development plan ensures a clear focus on what needs doing in the year ahead. In addition, the priorities for the next three years are also clearly set out, so that a sense of direction and purpose can be easily seen. In preparing the three-year plan, rigorous evaluation of the school's position is undertaken. The views of pupils, parents and all staff are sought. Governors are fully involved in production of the plan. At present, there is still more to do to ensure that the business and enterprise culture is fully supported and developed in all subjects, and is a priority for the school's current development.
94. The leadership and management of the special educational needs team are very good. There is very good communication between the co-ordinator, the other special needs teacher and nine teaching assistants. The management and deployment of the teaching assistants is very good. They receive excellent opportunities for professional development. There is appropriate use of generous funding to increase the team. The eventual aim is to have a teaching assistant supporting every subject.
95. The school has a strong commitment to staff development, and induction for new staff is very effective. They feel they are very well supported, and their contribution to the school is valued. The school also manages recruitment and retention very well. This has helped secure very good improvement since the previous inspection. Performance management are very well developed and supports the retention of staff. In addition, the school makes very good use of non-teaching staff to release teachers from administrative tasks, so that more emphasis can be placed on teaching and learning in the classroom.
96. Financial management is very good. Funds are allocated very efficiently to the school's development priorities. Governors are fully involved, and spending patterns are monitored very closely and successfully. Best value principles are very used well when purchasing materials and equipment, and the school has taken direct responsibility for its catering arrangements. As a consequence of careful financial management and bidding for grants, where appropriate, the school has been able to make substantial improvements to accommodation.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,701,882	Balance from previous year	86,926
Total expenditure	3,700,925	Balance carried forward to the next	87,883
Expenditure per pupil	3731		

The sixth form

97. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good overall. The process of transition from Year 11 to Year 12 is very smooth, and students are guided and encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. The school has successfully gone into partnership with another sixth form. Although this partnership is in its early stages, day-to-day issues are dealt with very well, and any teething problems are being effectively tackled.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- School life has many aspects that contribute to work-related learning.

- Currently contributions to work-related learning are insufficiently drawn together to produce a coherent work-related programme and insufficiently differentiated from other aspects of school life.
- There are inconsistencies in the management of work-related learning.
- A good range of vocational courses is offered in the sixth form and an increasing range in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

98. The school offers its pupils a wide range of experiences that make a significant contribution to many aspects of work-related learning. Five days of work experience in Year 10 give pupils direct contact with work, so that they are able to have first-hand knowledge of the work place. Other opportunities to learn through work occur in the design and technology construction day, and through problem solving in mathematics. Pupils can learn about work through a range of enterprise activities that are a characteristic of the school. Pupils also make visits to such places as the Honister Slate Mines, where they learn about the issues surrounding the setting up of a business. Various organisations such as the armed services visit the school. These create an awareness of many practical issues that would not otherwise be easily accessible through books and lessons.
99. Nonetheless, activities in the classroom and elsewhere form an important part of pupils' work-related learning. The PSHCE programme includes many activities that have a direct bearing on the world of work. Pupils prepare CVs and National Record of Achievement progress files. They make presentations in English and attend a 'Work Ready' conference. Some pupils participating in catering and other vocational courses have first-hand experience of work as part of the course. Each year a small group of these pupils spends a week working in a hotel. In year 10, a small group of students are studying construction at a local further education college. These and other opportunities prepare pupils for work.
100. The school's agricultural unit provides a unique opportunity for work-related learning, especially for those pupils studying agriculture in Years 10 and 11. However, all pupils gain from some contact with this valuable resource.
101. Across the school as whole, however, much more could be done, particularly in individual subject departments, to identify where further contributions to work-related learning could be made. At present, it is insufficiently an aspect of pupils' learning in its own right and it has yet to become an explicitly identifiable subject in which pupils' standards and achievements are assessed and recorded. Management is unsatisfactory as the many contributions to work-related learning have yet to be drawn together into a single whole. The leadership is satisfactory.

The sixth form

102. The degree to which students in the sixth form experience work-related learning varies according to the courses they choose. Aspects are covered in general studies, taken by all students. Many study vocational courses in health and social care, leisure and recreation, retail and distribution, business, ICT and science. Each of these courses has a strong work-related element.

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

- Good teaching and learning result in good pupil achievement.
- Standards are improving because of very good leadership.
- Good additional support is improving pupils' literacy skills.
- There is a need to widen the opportunities for pupils to use ICT in English lessons.

Commentary

103. Standards in English are average with clear indications of improvement. In 2004, results in tests at the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average, and average compared with similar schools. In the last two years they have been above average. Results in GCSE English and English literature are close to the national average. There has been a consistent trend in improvement in national tests and examinations since 2000. Standards seen during the inspection are higher. Pupils' standards of speaking and listening are above average. They participate well in small group discussion and present their ideas clearly and confidently. Reading skills are above average: pupils read with appreciation and understanding from a variety of literary and media texts. Standards of writing are at least average and improving. Most pupils write with increasing accuracy for a range of purposes and audiences. The content of the writing is lively and reflects a clear personal response.
104. Because high attaining pupils are well-challenged and low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are very well supported, pupils' achievement overall is good. There are a few exceptions in Year 10 where the achievement of some average attaining pupils is hampered by negative attitudes to learning. Girls' performance is higher than that of boys in national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations, but there is evidence of some change. In 2004, the proportion of boys achieving the highest grades increased.
105. The quality of teaching and learning is good across the school, with some examples of very good teaching. Where teaching is most effective the lessons are very well planned and structured. The learning objectives are clearly communicated at the start and reinforced at the end of the lesson. Teachers give tight time targets; the lesson proceeds at a good pace and there is a good variety of tasks, activities and groupings, so that pupils are interested and work purposefully. Lively starter activities are used very effectively to focus the pupils' attention and to reinforce previous learning. Often these take the form of a game or competition. For example, Year 11 pupils competed enthusiastically to see who could identify and label the most linguistic features from the front page of that day's newspaper. Pupils are also given very clear criteria for success and are encouraged to evaluate their own work, so that Year 7 pupils are able to identify and evaluate the use of rhetorical and presentational devices in each other's speeches. In the main, teachers' marking is detailed and helpful and pupils are given clear targets for improvement. Pupils with low levels of literacy are very well supported both individually and in small groups focusing on reading, spelling and writing skills.
106. In the few instances where learning is less effective, the purpose of tasks set are insufficiently clear and pupils are not discouraged from wasting time on unnecessary tasks such as copying out writing twice. Sometimes the teacher is too reliant on a textbook and does not adapt tasks sufficiently for the differing needs of pupils. Some teachers do not direct their questions

sufficiently at individual pupils and do not leave lower attaining pupils enough time to read and reflect so that they can respond.

107. Curricular leadership is very good; management is good. The subject leader is a very good classroom practitioner who sets a very good example. She has a clear vision for improvement and a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the department, providing good professional support and development where appropriate. There is a very clear development plan based on detailed analysis of examination results and identified needs which has already resulted in improved attitudes and achievement by boys in the subject. The opportunities for enrichment are good. The department provides booster classes and additional support for examinations, as well as theatre visits and visits to the school by a poet and a children's author. One area for improvement is in the use of ICT. Although there are some good examples of pupils using ICT, for example the use of desktop publishing and the manipulation of images to produce leaflets and brochures, the lack of access to computers means that opportunities are limited and inconsistent.
108. Because the quality of teaching and learning is higher; assessment, recording and reporting are better, and standards are rising, improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

109. English language and literacy skills are above average and the co-ordination of these skills is very good. Pupils use good discussion skills; vocabulary and key words are very well reinforced and pupils generally use the language of different subjects accurately. There are many, planned opportunities for extended, non-fiction writing in different subjects.

Modern foreign languages

Courses in French and German were inspected.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement improves as they move through the school.
- Good use of assessment contributes to this improvement.
- Pupils make a slow start to learning languages because tasks are not matched to their potential as well as they could be in Year 7.
- The quality of teaching in some lessons in French is unsatisfactory.
- Provision of books and pupil workbooks is good, but as yet there is no use of ICT to enhance learning.

Commentary

110. French is now the first foreign language taken by all pupils from Year 7 and as an option in Years 10 and 11. The present Year 11 is the last year in which half the pupils took French and the other half German. German is studied by higher attaining pupils from Year 8 as a second foreign language. About a third do so in Years 8 and 9 for one hour a week. It is taken as an option in Years 10 and 11; although there is only one small group in Year 10.
111. GCSE results in French in 2003 were above average but they declined in 2004. In 2003, boys did as well as boys nationally, whilst girls did much better than other girls. Teacher assessments for 2003 showed average standards at the end of Year 9 as well as a similar decline in 2004. Standards seen on the inspection match the 2003 outcomes. At the end of Year 9, standards overall are average, but there is exceptional attainment by pupils in higher sets, most clearly in Year 8. Such pupils achieve very well in response to very good teaching, but overall achievement is no better than satisfactory. A minority of pupils underachieve

where they are not challenged appropriately. Some pupils with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well, but in large mixed ability classes in Year 7 they do not achieve as well as they should because tasks are not matched to their potential as well as they could be.

112. Approximately one-third of pupils have chosen to do a language in Year 10, the majority of these having chosen French. Year 11 is the last year where a language was largely compulsory. Standards rise over the two years and are above average at GCSE. This is good achievement and reflects good teaching. Pupils' achievement improves as they move through the school, partly because of good use of assessment.
113. Standards at GCSE in German have been consistently above average. Standards which match the national levels are expected by the end of Year 9. This represents very good achievement, given the limited time spent on the subject. Standards seen in Year 11 are above average, which is also very good achievement because of the wide range of prior attainment.
114. Overall, teaching in French is satisfactory in the first three years and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good language skills and most use them to good effect in lessons. However, the quality of teaching in some lessons in French is unsatisfactory, because of poor classroom management. Homework is well used because pupils have workbooks to support learning. Leadership overall is satisfactory, but management is good. Assessment procedures involve pupils well in the setting and review of their own targets. Pupils have in the recent past annual opportunities for study visits to France.
115. Teaching in German by a single subject specialist is very effective. Expectations are very high and efficient planning ensures that the limited time is used to best effect. Pupils respond very well to challenging teaching, which allows no lapse of concentration. German culture is well represented in the classroom, and until very recently there has been over many years an annual exchange of visits with a school in Bremen, the impact of which is still felt.
116. As yet, there is no use of ICT to enhance learning in either language. However, overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Good use is made of homework to extend learning opportunities.
- Good use is made of limited ICT that is available within lessons.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils enhance learning experiences.

Commentary

117. Standards in mathematics on entry to the school in Year 7 are just above average in most years. Recent results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were well above average and represent very good achievement when compared with results on entry. Although the trend has been slightly up over the last few years, the results have not risen as quickly as those nationally and in 2003 were slightly below the national average. However, results for 2004, show a marked upward improvement and are now well above the national average. This improvement was attributed to the careful targeting of pupils by booster classes and the provision of revision CDs.

118. The results in the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 have been consistently very much higher than the national average over the last few years. There has been little difference between the performance of boys and girls, and pupils with special learning difficulties. This shows achievement above average, with higher attaining pupils achieving especially well. Current work seen in lessons, and in pupils' exercise books, also indicates that standards are above average in all years. Pupils' work shows much care and attention. Their work is usually neatly presented, and their knowledge and understanding are built upon well, resulting in very good overall achievement.
119. The subject is inclusive of all pupils. There is no noticeable difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are identified in all lessons although there are times when the work covered does not always take into account their needs. However, where these pupils are taught together as a class, smaller numbers, specialist teaching and the presence of a learning support assistant allows them to make good progress.
120. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. This is shown in lessons, which both stimulate and enhance the learning process of pupils. Lessons are very well planned and are designed to provide variety and pace. Homework is set frequently with activities, which extend and challenge pupils, building upon work covered in class. Assessment is carried out regularly both through careful question and answer sessions in class, marking of books and regular half-termly tests with results being stored in a central database. Although marking in books does not link to National Curriculum levels, pupils are actively engaged in their assessment process, informed of their present level of attainment and, jointly with their teacher, agree their target for the next session. There is good use of praise to encourage pupils. The use of ICT is limited by the amount of equipment available. In lessons where an electronic 'Smartboard' was in place, the equipment was used expertly and the lesson proceeded with noticeable pace.
121. In lessons, pupils are interested in their work. This is reflected in the way that they ask and answer questions, and their general participation in the lesson. Their good attitude is reflected in the amount of work in their class books, which are also neat and devoid of any graffiti. In the best lessons, pupils remain on task for the whole of the lesson and their work output is high. When given the opportunity, pupils work well in small groups and help each other understand the complexities of the subject. Pupils talk willingly about the subject and are able to explain their work clearly. They say that they like the subject and enjoy working with their teachers.
122. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. The head of department has a clear vision of where he wants to go and is supported in this by a group of dedicated teachers. There is evidence of good team spirit within the department. Schemes of work are fully in place and are electronically connected to relevant sites on the Internet. This enhances their use as a valuable tool for teaching by identifying relevant learning material for pupils and teachers. Assessment opportunities are fully identified and there is a sophisticated tracking system in place. This allows the department to check on any pupil who is failing to achieve, or working beyond, the agreed target with diagnostic measures available for those in need. Resources and accommodation in general are good and the limited amount of ICT equipment in the department is used well. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

123. Pupils' application of mathematical skills in other curriculum areas is very good. Pupils practise numeracy regularly in mental tests at the beginning of mathematics lessons and this enables them to develop a facility with numbers, which can be seen in other subjects. This is demonstrated, for example, with pupils in a Year 7 lesson measuring out quantities of food as part of a recipe, and again in a Year 10 lesson where they had to calculate proportions of food in the recipe and work out the cost. In science, measurements of speeds and distances allow

their representation in graph work, whilst in physical education lessons pupils are required to graph results of heart rates from fitness testing.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national averages and pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils very well.
- Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are very good.
- The amount of technical support is unsatisfactory.
- There is not enough ICT equipment.

Commentary

124. Following several years of rising standards, results in the national tests for Year 9 matched the national averages in 2003. They also matched the performance of pupils in other schools who were at a similar standard in Year 7. In 2004, a further improvement produced results that were above the recently published national averages and well above the standards reached by pupils of similar prior attainment. As pupils enter the school with average standards, this level of improvement demonstrates very good achievement. Boys and girls perform equally well and pupils with special educational needs also achieve well. All the evidence gathered during the inspection confirmed the maintenance of the 2004 standards. For example, pupils in Year 9 can distinguish between heat and temperature and display very good graphing skills.
125. There has been a rising trend in GCSE results since 1999. In 2003, results were well above the national averages and comparison with the same pupils' performance at the end of Year 9 showed good achievement. In 2004, the proportion gaining the higher grades (A* to C), particularly amongst girls, fell. However, the proportion gaining the highest grades (A* or A) rose. Overall, the results were close to those of 2003. Again, comparison with prior attainment in Year 9 shows good achievement. Over recent years, the gap between the performance of boys and girls has been less than the national difference. The present Year 11 pupils are working at standards that match the most recent results. Building on very effective learning in Year 10, they have impressive analytical skills. High quality practical skills were exemplified by accurate use of micrometer gauges to measure the diameter of electrical wires. Overall, achievement from Year 7 to 11 is very good.
126. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Of the lessons observed, none was unsatisfactory and three out of every five were very good. Excellent relationships with pupils of all levels of attainment are resulting in a proper climate for learning. Pupils trust and respect their teachers and behaviour is uniformly very good. The level of difficulty and pace of lessons are well judged and give pupils the confidence to persevere with tasks that they find hard. Lessons have clear learning objectives and most include a check on the effectiveness of learning. Pupils find this evidence of success very motivating. Most lessons are enriched by practical work using high quality resources prepared by the excellent technicians. All these features were evident in a very good Year 8 lesson on separation techniques. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including several with special educational needs, were challenged to find and use the right technique for separating a variety of different mixtures. Very well supported by the teacher and a teaching assistant, pupils worked enthusiastically for the whole lesson. By the end of a thoroughly enjoyable lesson, all had made significant gains in understanding and practical skills.

127. Very good leadership is evident in strong teamwork. Teachers and technicians form a mutually supportive group dedicated to providing the best for pupils. Morale is high and all are constantly seeking improvement. Management systems are all very effective and directed towards raising standards. The decision taken in 1999 to teach groups of varying attainment in Years 7 to 9 has proved very successful. Since then, skilful teaching has ensured steadily rising standards across the full range of pupils. The options available for GCSE meet the needs of different pupils very well. Some follow the orthodox double science award; others take a combination of single science and rural science. The latter is predominantly based on agriculture. The presence of a small farm and opportunities to experience most of the skills required in handling and caring for animals has a tremendous impact on many pupils. All pupils, as well as those taking the GCSE course, experience elements of the work, for example incubating and hatching eggs. The recent farrowing of the Gloucester Old Spot sow and the chance to see newborn piglets enriched the learning opportunities of almost everyone in the school. Assessment of progress and the use of data to set ambitious targets for individual pupils and to check the effectiveness of teaching are very well developed. Teaching is constantly monitored by direct observation and professional development is given high priority.
128. The department is very well served by qualified and dedicated technicians. However, the hours of work, which have recently been reduced, are insufficient to meet all the needs of a very varied curriculum. In the short term, hard work is ensuring that standards are being maintained. When all four post-16 courses start to undertake coursework, the deficiencies may become apparent.
129. There is only one data projector shared between twelve teachers and no interactive whiteboard. This level of ICT equipment is less than normally seen in a science department. This deficiency limits teachers' ability to use this very effective technology to illustrate the many difficult three-dimensional concepts that often include movement and which many children struggle to understand. There is a good stock of electronic sensors for temperature, etc, but the lack of enough modern computers limits pupils' direct experience of using this technology.
130. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement. Standards have risen, teaching is better, leadership and management have improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in ICT by age 16 is above average.
- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Management of the subject is very good.
- Feedback to pupils and guidance on their progress is excellent.
- The use of ICT for learning in subjects across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Commentary

131. Attainment reported at the end of Year 9 is in line with the national expectation. Work seen during the inspection is also in line. The ICT strand of the National Strategy has been successfully introduced in Years 7 and 8 resulting in improvements in pupils' ICT capability. Pupils can create a web page using both native code and a web page editor. They can evaluate a presentation using criteria that they have developed. They can develop a ticket booking system using a spreadsheet and can use mail merge to produce letters from information in a database.

132. The majority of pupils study a GCSE short course in Years 10 and 11. Attainment by age 16 is above average. That in 2004 was a significant improvement upon the previous year. The current standard of work in Years 10 and 11 is also above the national average. Pupils are able to design, review, annotate and improve a leaflet and deduce design criteria. They can develop a spreadsheet to calculate the costs of a training course, including validation of input data. They can link fields in a database in designing one for a veterinary centre, for example, and design search queries to select entries with careful reference to performance criteria for the task.
133. On entry to the school, pupils' experiences of ICT are mixed. The current achievement of pupils by age 14 is good across the range of ability due to effective planning and good teaching at this level. Achievement in Year 8 is particularly high, reflecting the impact of the development of new teaching units. Achievement by age 16 is good in relation to ability for all groups of learners, including those pupils who study the RSA CLAIT course. Students make good progress in response to detailed guidance they receive on how marks are awarded. The achievement of pupils when using ICT in other subjects is well below what would be expected in a school with this level of ICT resources.
134. Teaching is consistently good in each of Years 7 to 9. Just one lesson seen was unsatisfactory. Lessons are supported by detailed lesson plans, guides, handouts and planned homework. The structure of lessons is based around 'PowerPoint' presentations, which clarify objectives and support practical demonstrations. Key Stage 3 National Strategy sample materials have been adapted and developed in detail and a clarity about learning methods and goals accounts for the good quality of learning seen at this level. Work is marked frequently and pupils receive good guidance on how to reach the higher grades. Lessons run at pace with good teacher intervention that ensures good progress is made.
135. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good overall and very good in a quarter of lessons. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge and use methods which provide good support to pupils of differing ability. Course handouts and guides are of very good quality and help pupils to work at their own pace. Individual pupil guidance is a strong feature of all lessons, which promotes individual achievement. Pupils work independently and with confidence, demonstrating the fluent application of ICT skills.
136. Leadership for ICT developments is good in most respects. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection, which has contributed to all pupils now achieving well. However, pupils are not yet able to apply their ICT capability to their learning more generally across other subjects due to a lack of availability of ICT for curriculum use, in sharp comparison to a significant number of laptops purchased for administrative use.
137. The management of ICT is very good. The adoption of the ICT strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been exceptionally well managed, and is leading to rapid improvements to pupils' levels of attainment. The department has worked well as a team to introduce sample teaching units across each of Years 7-9 and the teaching quality seen reflects the considerable amount of planning that teachers undertake. Computers are effectively managed by an able and well-qualified technician.
138. Since the last inspection, attainment by age 16 has improved and is now above the national average. The quality of teaching has improved and is now consistently good. The design of lessons now caters well for extending the learning of abler pupils, although there remains scope for further improvement. Facilities for ICT have significantly improved in the last five years, although the limited use of ICT in other subjects noted at the last inspection has not significantly improved in many areas.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

139. Although there is an above average number of computers in the school, they are mostly employed for specialist ICT teaching. Subject areas largely make use of the 20 computers in the library resources area, although this facility is not yet fully developed as an adequate e-

learning area. There are good examples of ICT use within some subjects, notably within design and technology, which is a model of good practice in this respect. However, ICT across subjects is generally underdeveloped, lying below the level now seen in schools nationally. Significant missed opportunities to make learning more effective using the medium of ICT were noted in English, modern languages and music. With levels of ICT capability increasing there is much scope to expect a greater impact of ICT use upon pupils' achievements across their subjects.

140. The Key Stage 3 Strategy in ICT has had an impact on raising standards in Years 7 and 8. It is not fully implemented in Year 9 and further improvement in pupils' attainment can be expected when this has been achieved. A number of whiteboards have been made available under a national initiative and the use of these is starting to influence teaching in several subjects. This is particularly so in mathematics, where they are used in an interactive manner. Every teacher has the use of a laptop computer and although this has generally increased staff confidence, this investment is yet to impact significantly on teachers' use of ICT. E-learning Credits have added to the software available to departments but there is some way to go before an adequate library of electronic learning resources is available across all subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

The provision for geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average. Pupils achieve well.
- Good teaching engages pupils and high teacher expectations drive learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils understand their targets and know how well they are doing.
- The department makes a strong contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy.
- Difficulties in accessing computers limit their use.

Commentary

141. Pupils enter the school with a varied but often limited background in geography. Aided by a progressive syllabus enriched with well-chosen case studies, they make good progress. By Year 9, standards are close to but slightly above national expectations. Pupils know, for example, why the population of France is unevenly distributed. They understand why Paris is the largest city. They have the skills to use maps and are beginning to be aware of where places are.
142. The number of pupils who continue to GCSE fluctuates, but geography is a popular option subject. In 2004, the proportion, which attained at least grade C was close to the national average - lower than it had been the previous year. The number of high grades, however, was above average. This indicates the effectiveness of strategies for stretching the attainment of the most able pupils. The department has been active in raising boys' attainment. Boys did slightly better than girls overall. There were few low grades. Throughout Years 7-11, the needs of less able pupils and those with learning difficulties are well understood. Adapted worksheets are increasingly available. Teachers tailor their expectations. Support staff is well used. The standards currently being achieved are in stark contrast to the poor attainment previously reported. The dramatic improvement confirms that inspector's optimism.
143. Most pupils enjoy geography and work hard. Relationships with each other and with their teachers are positive. Teachers know their pupils. Poor behaviour is no longer evident. Pupils willingly contribute to question and answer sessions. They rise to the teachers' high expectations of them. However, the single weekly lesson slows the rate of learning by Year 7

pupils. Teachers plan their lessons with a variety of activities, which give them structure and pace. This generally holds pupils on task. The use of local examples where appropriate adds reality. Homework is well used to extend learning. The previous report commented on the tendency of teachers to tell their pupils too much – some, from time to time, still do.

144. Learning in a Year 8 lesson was driven by good planning. The mix of task and talk engaged pupils throughout. Pupils were challenged to explain the growth of Paris and the problems this has brought. They drew and used graphs. They had opportunities for creative writing and for debate. Exercises were adapted for the more and the less able pupils in this lower set so that all achieved very well. A Year 11 class enjoyed the bingo game, which cleverly reinforced their use of terminology related to population. Learning was driven in subsequent work on the Aswan Dam because pupils worked independently and were required to think for themselves about the pros and cons of the issue.
145. The department is very well led and managed. Its work is regularly reviewed. The development plan therefore is well informed and addresses the areas, which should raise standards. Pupils have clear targets to aim for. They know how well they are doing and how to improve. Fieldwork is well integrated into the course. The department is well resourced. Teaching is wholly in the hands of specialists. Some accommodation can be cramped but all benefits from the displays of pupils' work. The English Nature roof garden adopted by Year 7 is an attractive feature. However, there is no ICT equipment in classrooms and access to computers in lessons can be difficult. This limits their use in raising attainment further.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising steadily because of very good teaching.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- The scheme of work is insufficiently focused on precise learning outcomes.

Commentary

146. In external examinations in 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was broadly in line with the national average. Girls outperformed boys by over ten per cent but were in line with girls nationally. These results form part of an upward trend. In 2004, about two-thirds of pupils attained grades A*-C. This is a little above the national figure. This picture corresponds broadly with standards of work seen during the inspection and reflects rapidly growing recruitment for the sixth form.
147. By the end of Year 9, standards are well in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement, because pupil attainment on entry is just below average in history, and because of the good progress made by both the lowest and highest attaining pupils in Year 9. The former can use computers to produce well balanced, extended accounts of working conditions in factories during the Industrial Revolution, while the latter make impressively critical use of Daumier drawings of poverty in London in the 1840s – in particular when assessing their usefulness as evidence. Middle and lower attaining pupils make less rapid progress in Years 7 and 8. They show good knowledge – in particular of religious changes in the mid-Tudor period – but understanding of the nature and status of historical source material is relatively weak.
148. By the end of Year 11, standards are more clearly above average. This reflects good achievement, given broadly average attainment at the end of Year 9. The introduction of single-sex groupings in Year 10 has had a noticeably good effect on the range and quality of boys' written work. The lowest achievers and those with special educational needs again

make particularly good progress. For example, a lower set in Year 10 can use 'market stall' activities to find out from each other what role 'Alphabet Agencies' played in alleviating economic depression in the USA in the 1930s; a similar technique is used by much abler pupils in Year 10 to negotiate factors that enabled Hitler to consolidate his rise to power in 1933-34. Abler pupils in Year 11 can discuss developmental terms, such as 'false dawn' and 'turning point' with confidence and offer sophisticated evaluations of source material, though they do not always make best use of contextual or circumstantial factors for this purpose.

149. Teaching is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. It is characterised throughout by innovative, pupil-centred techniques that are used to gain or sustain pupils' interest. Learning in history is challenging but fun and pupils respond very positively to the opportunities offered. Two examples will suffice – a simple, 'peep-hole' device for interpreting detail on visual images, and a set of 'finger puppets' with which to enact negotiations leading to Hitler's assumption of the German Chancellorship in 1933. A good scheme of assessment is in place, but not all assessment tasks are clearly focused on assessment objectives. Relatively little use is made of ICT.
150. The department is very well led and managed. The acting subject leader shows impressive vision and commitment and has moved the department on considerably over the last two years. An interest in learning permeates all teaching and there is a strong team ethos in both planning and teaching activities.
151. The style of management is participative and collective. Routines are well known and understood and effective measures are in place for supporting new or inexperienced staff. The routines of performance management are well established and supported by an active and wide-ranging programme of in-service training. Day-to-day planning and organisation are good. However, the scheme of work is insufficiently focused on conceptual learning objectives and on how these might determine classroom and assessment activities.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staffing for religious education is now very good.
- Teaching is very good, overall.
- GCSE examination results are above average.
- Good progress has been made since the last inspection.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils is inadequate.

Commentary

152. At the end of Year 11, in 2004, attainment in the GCSE short course was above the national average. Around two-thirds of pupils gained the higher grades of A*-C and almost all attained at least grade G. The grades are very similar to the results attained in 2003 and a significant improvement on previous years. The results of girls are better than those of boys. The standards seen during the inspection are above those expected nationally. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the teachings of Christianity on a range of moral and social issues, such as poverty and wealth, and peace and justice. Their written skills are good, as is their ability to think through the range of philosophical ideas presented to them. Their verbal responses on these issues are also good. The achievement of the pupils is good.

153. At the end of Year 9, there is some variation in the standards of attainment. It is satisfactory overall, but often it is good. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of many aspects of world religions, such as the life of religious leaders, and religion and values. They recognise many religious artefacts and they understand how some of them are used in the different religious traditions. Their knowledge and understanding of the basic beliefs that are important to world religions could be stronger. Their written skills are good and pupils can make intelligent verbal responses. The achievement of the pupils is good.
154. Across the years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress through the support given to them in lessons. The gifted and talented and more able pupils make satisfactory progress but at times they would benefit from more demanding work, particularly for when they finish the work before the others. Pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop their information technology skills.
155. Overall, teaching is very good. All lessons are well prepared and they include a wide range of learning activities. Some of these activities, such as the use of religious artefacts, are very imaginative and they help the pupils concentrate on their work. Occasionally some pupils become a little restless, but, in the main, pupils are well behaved. The expertise of the teachers enables the learning to put across clearly and effectively. Lessons have strong content drawn from world religions. The pace of the lessons is fast and so pupils learn a lot in the time available. Pupils not only learn about religions but also they are encouraged to see how their learning might have relevance to their own lives and experiences. Homework is set and an active and effective assessment policy is in place. Different levels of work are available for the various levels of ability, though more work could be available for the pupils who find the work easier than the others. Teaching makes a good contribution to the development of literacy skills. It also contributes well to pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
156. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Since the last inspection, a lot of hard work has been undertaken by the head of department to address issues that were raised. Progress since then has been good. The staffing is very good. Accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Courses in design and technology were fully inspected. These include GCSE courses in food, graphics, resistant materials, and systems technologies, as well as textiles in Years 7-9. Vocational courses in catering and construction are also offered. The former was observed during the inspection. The course in construction is a new option in Year 10. It is taught at a local college of further education and was not inspected.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is excellent by Year 9.
- Standards in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are excellent.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent.
- School decisions about curriculum time and option choices have restricted the curriculum offer in Years 9 and 10 and will have an adverse impact on standards.

Commentary

157. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 indicated standards of work that were well above average. Inspection of work confirms that position; standards in Years 7 to 9 are well above average overall and pupils' achievement is excellent. There is no significant difference in quality between boys' and girls' work. Pupils' with special educational needs are impossible to identify in the classroom; they work just as hard, behave just as well and make things as well as others.
158. All contributory areas of design and technology produce work of a high quality; of particular note is the very high quality making of projects in wood, metal and plastic, for example the steady hand game in Year 7 and the really excellent plant holders made of steel in Year 8. The latter project demonstrates a growing confidence in design, an appreciation of the different properties of materials, how structures react to forces, and knowledge of an advanced process, welding, available through the effective use of a skilled technician. Textiles technology gets a very fine start in Years 7 and 8, which time limitations halt in Year 9. There is no current textiles course in Years 10 and 11. The hat project in Year 8 results in high quality work and the design notes pupils generate alongside their making demonstrate and foster some imaginative work. Electronic systems and control is of a good standard which could be driven higher if techniques used in Year 10, for example to create printed circuit boards, were moved to these earlier years. No food technology lessons in Years 7 to 9 were seen during the inspection but associated written work was and this was above average. In addition, the flawless way in which Year 10 pupils, taking a GCSE in food technology, prepare, cook, evaluate, and clear up when cooking is solid evidence of at least very good preparatory work when they were younger. This is despite having no food technology in Year 9 due to a change in school timetabling, which resulted in design and technology time being reduced to well below the minimum needed to teach the National Curriculum.
159. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average overall and across all contributing areas of work. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A*- C was above average but there was a well above average proportion of A - B grades. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A*- G was above average and no pupil attained lower than an E grade. 2003 results were, overall, a little better. There was a about an equal number of boys and girls taking design and technology in 2003, whereas there was a significantly higher proportion of boys in 2004; typically and nationally, girls attain higher grades in examinations.
160. In addition to GCSEs in food, graphics, resistant materials, and systems technologies, a GCSE in catering is offered. This is a vocational course available to previously low attaining pupils with low predicted examination grades. In 2004 there were 10 pupils entered, none attained less than an E grade and 3 attained a C grade. Their achievement was excellent. There is no doubt that the excellent residential at a hotel, where pupils were trained in and participated in the work of the hotel, was inspiring to them. At inspection they were still talking about it and, more importantly, relating their hotel experiences to catering at the school.

Example of outstanding practice

An unusual residential fosters high achievement in GCSE catering

A small group of low attaining pupils take a GCSE in catering and typically achieve highly in examinations despite poor school accommodation and resources for this course. A significant contribution to pupils' learning is the very high quality residential organised for them at a good quality hotel. Pupils are taken on as 'trainees' and supervised helpers by hotel staff. They experience a wide range of skills needed on their course, whilst learning appropriate knowledge about the catering industry. This residential is provided by the hotel chain in exchange for training of their staff by the catering teacher; an excellent example of an education – business partnership. Boys, not on the catering course, are not forgotten as those on a pre-vocational craft skills course participate in hotel maintenance sessions. Catering course pupils reinforce their knowledge and understanding in a very well planned visit to the school kitchens, supervised by the school's catering manager.

161. Standards of current written, drawn, or design work in Years 10 and 11 range from above average in food and in systems to well above average in graphics. Standards in making are well above average across the board. Pupils can cut, shape, mix, join, assemble and finish a wide range of materials appropriate to the course they are on. If they are taking graphics then they can draw, use appropriate ICT, present and model work to a very high standard. And, in systems, they can design and construct complex electronic circuits and the devices, which contain them or are controlled by them, to a high standard. They are also able to explain how their circuits work, and what effect changing components has, very well indeed.
162. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent; they are fostered and encouraged by the very hard work put in by dedicated teachers. Teaching and learning across all years are excellent. Many pupils said they loved this subject and got on really well. If they fall a little behind they have to do more work in lunchtimes and they willingly do so. They are proud of the high quality products they make; they want to do a very good job and they want to take their products home, whether they be food or of wood, metal or plastic.
163. All teachers are at least very effective and this is what makes this department one of the very best seen by the subject inspector. All teachers are very knowledgeable, very hard-working, and very effectively plan, organise, evaluate and assess their own teaching, each other's teaching, and pupils' learning. It is a unique team, which is a credit to them and to the subject team leader whose leadership and management are both excellent.

Example of outstanding practice

The organisation and assessment of pupils' work, which encourages excellence.

Teachers ensure all pupils' work is thoroughly organised so that all understand what to do, how well they have done and how to improve. Projects are organised to enable high quality products to be designed and made. Pupils are helped, encouraged and challenged to do their best and only their best is acceptable. Such are the very good relations between pupils and staff that pupils respond whole-heartedly to the challenges. High quality displays abound to stimulate pupils' ideas and to show them what good work is. Much use is made of work produced by pupils, which is placed in appropriate places around the department. The quality of much of this pupils' work is on a par with work available on loan from design institutes; thus, this school creates its own design museum. Assessment is very thorough and on full display to classes and to individual pupils. In addition, skills in self and peer assessment build as pupils get older and this reinforces their capability of evaluating commercial designs and products. Overall, assessment is used in an excellent way to enhance pupils' learning.

164. The subject team leader has ensured his team work as one, and that individual strengths are broad and broadening, whether it be in textiles or the use of ICT. He has, with the support of the school and governors, led the design and refurbishment of much of the accommodation; the teaching team had a lot of influence on the design of rooms. The new aspects are excellent; the old food area is unsatisfactory. The subject team leader is an excellent role model; other staff pursue even higher standards in healthy professional competition. Evaluation of the subject is of high level. Very good use is being made of ICT provision, including three interactive whiteboards, to help teaching. Standards in pupils' use of ICT in Year 10, for example, are well above average; pupils can use graphics programmes very well and effortlessly import images and text from one programme to another to complete their very good designs of game boards and so on. Currently not all rooms are equipped. Pupils' computer-assisted machine work would take off and rise to higher standards if larger and more sophisticated machinery was available.
165. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. However, some whole school curriculum decisions have had an impact on this otherwise excellent provision. There has been a reduction in time in Year 9 and the curriculum offer made to pupils in Year 9 last year resulted in the removal of resistant materials from the curriculum in Year 10 this year. Thus, a

very successful subject will not be present in the GCSEs of 2005. The school recognises these flaws in their curriculum planning and steps are being taken to address them next year. The vision of the subject team leader and of all design and technology staff is one of expansion, not contraction. Inspection supports the view that this school could be a centre of excellence in engineering and other vocational provision.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good, and pupils achieve well as a result.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.
- There is not enough experimentation with materials.
- ICT is not used widely enough in Years 7-9 fully to support and extend all pupils' work.

Commentary

166. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average. Pupils' achievement is good, and they make good gains in the skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Their work in pattern and colour is strong, and they produce vibrant circular designs based on a study of Native American pottery. They draw confidently, and higher attaining pupils produce accurate figure sketches in charcoal. Prints are bright and colourful, and paintings based on the work of the 'Pop' artists are boldly drawn and coloured. However, while ICT is used for research, its use is not widespread enough to fully support and extend all pupils' work.
167. In 2003, results at GCSE were average. Most pupils did worse in their art and design than in most of their other subjects. In 2004, results showed considerable improvement and were well above average. In recent years results have varied, depending on the standards of those pupils who start the course in Year 10. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average. Pupils' achievement continues to be good. Their oil pastel work is very effective, and they produce vigorous studies from fruit and vegetables that are striking and attractive. Their still-life drawings are confident, accurately representing complex arrangements of everyday objects, set against patterned backgrounds. Their three-dimensional work is well made, and large masks are bright, and form lively displays. However, pupils' work in sketchbooks tends to be careful, rather than exciting, and they do not experiment enough with materials.
168. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, introductions are lively, and pupils are involved in demonstrations. For example, they take turns to roll out printing ink, prepare materials or produce patterns. This creates very high levels of interest, pupils are keen to take part, and they become absorbed in the lesson. This produces very good learning. Because teachers also have very good subject knowledge, they often give very effective individual advice. In a small number of lessons, however, pupils do not listen carefully enough, and they begin to chat, and work without concentrating as hard as they could. Learning is satisfactory in these lessons as a result.
169. Leadership and management are good. Though recently appointed, a clear vision for the future has been set out by the subject leader, and development planning is good. A lot has been achieved in a short time, and more exciting projects are already being introduced. In addition, the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. For example, they work with professional artists to produce stained glass windows or pavement art, they visit art galleries, and they often study the art of other cultures.

170. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Results at GCSE have shown improvement, and the quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' achievement, has been maintained at a good level.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The drama curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development.
- Very good leadership ensures consistently good teaching and learning.
- Assessment for learning results in good achievement.
- Lack of suitable accommodation for some classes impacts on teaching and learning.
- GCSE results are below the national average as a result of over- large teaching groups.

Commentary

171. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average. Whilst those in 2004 were below average, the group was large with a wide ability range. Standards observed were average by Year 9 and above average by Year 11.
172. In Year 7, pupils demonstrate a secure knowledge of drama vocabulary in, for example, group improvisations. In Year 8, pupils show skills in characterisation and, in Year 9, they develop knowledge and understanding of the key elements of performance, such as vocal volume, tone and pitch, to enable communication in story telling. In GCSE classes, pupils demonstrate a high level of understanding of the ways to communicate the social and cultural influences of a drama piece with an audience. All groups of pupils are able to achieve according to their own ability. Pupils achieve well because tasks are relevant to their experience. By setting individual short-term achievable targets, pupils are able to gain in confidence supported by group work and individual teacher attention. Overall, achievement is good by Year 9 and very good by Year 11.
173. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Tasks are well planned, focusing on techniques as well as drama outcomes. They are relevant and lessons move at a fast pace, engaging pupils and offering scope for the most able to develop at a faster pace. In Years 10 and 11, teachers encourage pupils to research the social background and culture of the scenes they perform and enable them to develop their creative and emotional responses by introducing physical stimuli, such as smell and sound. Schemes of work focus on the acquisition of skills and knowledge and understanding and there is a strong emphasis on the language of drama. Tasks are planned to engage pupils' interest by using their personal experiences, resulting in the development of personal and social skills and focusing on citizenship issues that enable them to explore their ideas and develop opinions. Good relationships support learning and pupils with behavioural difficulties are quickly involved and engaged. Pupils respond confidently in communicating ideas and demonstrating skills through improvisation. They work well together in group activities and are caring and supportive of the less able pupils, encouraging them to participate and enabling them to gain in confidence. They enjoy rehearsing and performing. They listen attentively and enthusiastically when others are speaking or performing, so that they can evaluate each other's work. They develop their work and reinforce understanding by writing up practical tasks for homework. Older pupils thoroughly research the background to their creative work and apply their knowledge and skills to their devised pieces and show their understanding in their written evaluations.
174. A focus on assessment is an integral part of every lesson and is closely related to agreed drama attainment levels or GCSE grades. All pupils know what level they have achieved in each aspect of the course and what they have to do in order to develop. Targets are set according to prior attainment and progress is regularly monitored. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and receive individual feedback so that they can see

how they can develop in order to access higher marks. Assessment data is used to inform planning. Overall, therefore, assessment is very good.

175. Leadership of the department is very good. There is good teamwork in this department of well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers. Teaching is monitored and supported and good practice is shared. The leadership has negotiated extra funding for the department by seeking external sponsorship for equipment and projects enabling the provision of workshops and additional performance opportunities. Good use is made of support teachers to encourage less able pupils to perform. All departmental materials and resources are well organised and displayed, creating a positive atmosphere for learning. Although accommodation and resources are adequate in the main drama studio, some classes are not taught in suitable spaces and even have to move classrooms halfway through a lesson in order for group performances to take place. This causes unnecessary stress for teachers and does not support the management of the few disruptive pupils.
176. Pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities to take part in extra-curricular drama activities including clubs, examination presentations and the annual school production. Rehearsals are approached with enthusiasm but with a professional and workmanlike manner enabling quick progress to take place. Gifted and talented pupils are offered additional opportunities to develop by providing the opportunity to gain further qualifications. Links with the community are strong; in particular, the work of Year 9 with the local elderly to the benefit of the pupils and those they visit.
177. Improvement since the last inspection is good, because standards seen and the quality of teaching and learning have been maintained.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment for learning results in high achievement.
- Consistently good teaching results in good learning.
- Outdated classroom instruments impact on teaching and learning.
- Insufficient use of ICT in Years 7-9.

Commentary

178. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average but have improved in 2004 to just above average. Work seen during the inspection in Year 9 was average. GCSE results in both 2003 and 2004 were above average, as was work observed during the inspection in Years 10 and 11. Given pupils levels on entry to the school, this represents good achievement by Year 9 and very good achievement by Year 11.
179. Throughout Years 7-9, pupils use and understand advanced musical language. In Year 7, they apply this to the two-part songs they sing. In Year 8, they can follow musical scores and recognise musical structures aurally and apply this knowledge to their own compositions. In Year 9, pupils create blues melodies over a 12 bar chord sequence. However, achievement is inhibited because classroom keyboard instruments are in poor repair and are in many cases outdated, so pupils are not able to record or layer their own work. Some pupils using keyboard percussion instruments are unable to access the task due to the inadequate note range. Performing and composing skills are, therefore, underdeveloped in Year 9, although listening skills are strong. At GCSE level, pupils compose complex pieces displaying a secure knowledge of compositional devices and notate and record their work using ICT. Aural skills are strong and pupils are able to use a wide variety of musical language to describe and compare performances. All groups of pupils achieve well because tasks are well differentiated and pupils know how they can improve in all aspects of the curriculum. All

pupils receive individual support in practical lessons and are set targets at each stage of their learning.

180. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7-9 and excellent in Years 10-11. Well-planned tasks both challenge and reinforce what is already known. A wide variety of teaching methods is used to engage pupils' interest and support learning. Teachers have high expectations and tasks are carefully linked within each lesson so that concepts are continually reinforced. Increased challenge is introduced each time a task is repeated. This results in both supporting slower learners and stretching the attainment of higher achievers, so that all pupils progress at a fast pace. Schemes of work in Years 7-9 are linked closely to the National Curriculum and include studies of music from other cultures. Strong emphasis is placed on key words of musical vocabulary, including their spelling, and starter activities are innovative and exciting, immediately engaging pupils' interest and building on prior knowledge. These are often linked to cross-curricular themes, such as the history of music with major events of world history. Pupils work well together and support each other in their learning and are caring and supportive of less able pupils. Pupils have a clear idea of how to progress. Attitudes and behaviour are good and well-established classroom practices ensure that pupils always listen attentively. Focus on assessment is an integral part of every lesson. All pupils know what level they have achieved in each aspect of the course and what they have to do in order to develop. Targets are set according to prior attainment and progress is regularly monitored. At GCSE level, students receive individual support and are given clear ideas of how to access higher grades. Assessment data is used to inform planning. Overall, therefore, assessment is very good.
181. Leadership and management are good. Innovative curriculum development ensures good learning and high achievement. There is good teamwork in the department of well-qualified teachers, who support each other and share good practice. All departmental materials and resources are well organised, displayed and presented, creating a positive atmosphere for learning. The team of instrumental teachers is well managed and supports the work of the department.
182. A good range of instrumental tuition is offered and is subsidised by the school. The instrumental team support the provision of a variety of extra-curricular activities, resulting in a regular programme of public concerts. Although provision of suitable ICT is adequate for GCSE, there is insufficient use in Years 7-9 to support the less able in their composing and to extend the gifted and talented.
183. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards are being maintained as a result of continued very good teaching and innovative curricular development, although lack of appropriate resources prevents a significant rise in standards. Assessment procedures are now very effective and have resulted in raising achievement for all groups of pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection as a result of inspired leadership and exemplary departmental team work.
- Very high expectations from teachers have improved participation and pupils now achieve well at all ages and very well on examination courses.
- All statutory omissions from the last inspection have been rectified and there is now very good continuity in learning across all years.
- There is inconsistent use of assessment records to identify short-term targets for individual learning, especially for the gifted and talented pupils.

Commentary

184. The 2003 GCSE examination results were well above the national average, representing very good achievement in comparison to the previous years' results. The 2004 results are higher again. The number of students who achieve the top grades in these examinations is also well above the national average. The present Year 10 and 11 GCSE pupils are maintaining these high levels of achievement. Standards at Years 9 are in line with those expected nationally. This signifies good improvement since the last inspection. Achievement is good between the ages of 11 and 16 because most pupils progressively improve games' skills and techniques and performance in a variety of activities. Achievement is further enhanced by good observation and evaluation skills. Planning for pupils' work between the ages of 14 and 16 has considerably improved and there is now very good continuity in learning across the later years. This is why standards are now above national expectations at the end of Year 11 compared to below those expectations at the last inspection. Standards have also improved at this age because pupils have learnt how to assess and modify their performances and to be more confident in giving feedback to others to help them assess their own strengths and weaknesses.
185. Teaching and learning are very good overall and often excellent. Teachers consistently make clear to pupils what is to be learnt. As a result pupils make good progress in lessons because they follow logical sequences to improve skills and techniques. Their understanding is further improved when they play in conditioned games, because teachers illustrate the important learning points of the lesson well and match them to game contexts. Teaching in many lessons uses excellent literacy strategies to help pupils learn technical words and concepts. In a GCSE theory lesson, pupils gave very good anatomical descriptions and functions of muscle groups as a result of challenging and innovative literacy tasks. Their understanding of theory to practice is a major reason why examination results have improved so significantly. In a very good Year 11 lesson, the teacher used excellent descriptions of the fielding skills needed in a game of rounders. This was typical of the teaching observed and a major reason why there is a very good understanding of the application of correct techniques to improve play. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved considerably since the last inspection because of teachers' high expectations of behaviour and participation. Rates of participation are now very high in all years, enabling pupils of all abilities to improve their individual and team performances, often to high levels. There is better progress in lessons when teachers use recorded assessment criteria to set short-term targets for all pupils based on their previous learning. In a Year 7 rugby lesson, pupils made excellent progress because assessments were used to distinguish the difficulty of work and the challenge to pupils at different levels. However, use of assessment records to identify short-term targets for individual learning is inconsistent, especially for the gifted and talented pupils.
186. Under the visionary leadership of its new head, the department has made excellent progress in remedying all of the key issues outlined in the last inspection. In addition, relevant subject audits and reviews have resulted in very good responses to other national initiatives, such as assessment and planning procedures and improving links with primary schools. There is a very good ethos, which values all pupils and seeks improvement in their learning through targeted intervention and support. Increasing numbers of pupils choosing examination options and those participating at high levels in extra-curricular clubs and external competitions is testimony to this positive ethos. Pupils with special education needs achieve very well because of sensitive teaching and grouping arrangements, including very good support from a knowledgeable classroom assistant. Those pupils who have been identified as 'talented' achieve very well on examination courses. Similar challenges are not secure for those who do not choose to take such courses and the new department policy has started the debate on how their learning can be enriched and further extended.

187. Practical facilities are very good and have a positive impact on learning. For example, hockey skills are higher than would be normally expected because of the very good astro-turf facilities. Accommodation has also been significantly improved with new changing rooms. There is a lack of a regular base for theory lessons, which restricts the potential to display and promote the work of the department and also access to further resources, especially ICT, to improve provision and learning.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

188. In Years 10 and 11, there are courses in business studies, health and social care, child development, construction and a pre-vocational ACE course. The course in health and social care, which was introduced in 2004 and replaced child development as an option, was sampled. There is one large option group. A good lesson was seen in which a lively mixed ability group of girls used computers to complete a health survey for the local council, analysed it for its presentation and content and subsequently compared it with the surveys they had drawn up themselves. This was a well-planned lesson which interested, engaged and challenged the pupils, most of whom made good progress supported and encouraged by the teacher and librarian. The lesson developed their ICT, literacy and analytical skills as well as raising and reinforcing their awareness of key aspects of health.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school provides for citizenship through regular personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons in Years 8, 9 and 11 and several day conferences in Year 10. In Year 7 it is addressed through a weekly period with the form tutor.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the co-ordinator are outstanding.
- The planning and organisation of citizenship/PSHE as a discrete curriculum subject is very effective.
- Good standards are achieved in all years.
- The quality of teaching is very good, including some excellent practice.
- There is a complete assessment scheme, including levelled assessments consistent with attainment descriptors for all years, self-review and progress files.
- There is uneven delivery of citizenship through curriculum subjects.

Commentary

189. Standards are good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 9, pupils demonstrate good understanding of the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom, the law and justice systems, the work of voluntary groups and the significant role of the media in society. They can interpret and evaluate visual and other forms of evidence to arrive at balanced judgements. By participating in responsible political activity, such as the Wigton curfew issue, pupils demonstrate awareness of the importance of individual liberties within a democratic society. By engaging with social issues, such as care for the elderly, they begin to question stereotypes and look to express this understanding through drama. In such ways, pupils are constantly challenged to think critically and to acknowledge competing points of view. Standards achieved, though never less than good, do vary from class to class.

190. By the end of Year 11, very good standards can be seen in both written and oral work. For example, in a top set in Year 11, pupils can gather and deploy information from several perspectives as part of an analysis of the Palestinian crisis and, as a result, propose possible ways of achieving a peaceful outcome. In doing so, most pupils show genuine empathy for the position taken by both sides and an ability to arrive at a balanced judgement based on critical use of the evidence provided. Their extended written work is of variable but mainly very good quality. In this way, pupils increase their understanding of global political conflicts, experience the complexity of conflict resolution and find satisfaction from taking responsibility for their own learning.
191. Pupil achievement is very good in all years. This is because of very good and occasionally excellent teaching, which places pupils firmly at the centre of the learning process and provides a stimulating array of innovative and inclusive learning experiences. This in turn is made possible by the fact that, except in Year 7, PSHCE exists as a discrete curriculum subject, delivered by a dedicated team of specialist teachers. There is no noticeable difference between the achievement of boys and girls, or between pupils of differing ability. This is because the syllabus is gender-neutral and issue-driven, and because the teaching is so cleverly inclusive.
192. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with several excellent features. It is never less than good. Differences in the quality of teaching can be explained by differences in craft knowledge and teacher questioning. Lists of expected learning outcomes and assessment objectives precede all activities. Pupils are invited to participate by innovative starter activities, often involving 'PowerPoint' presentations and are constantly challenged to think critically about matters at hand. The classroom itself becomes a receptacle for all kinds of stimulus material, skilfully placed before the lesson begins. Relevant, current information from the Internet is simultaneously made available, for example to pupils working on the Palestinian issue. Despite the complex nature of some lessons, there are unmistakable links between teaching objectives and learning outcomes. At its best, teaching of this calibre can only be described as expert. The high quality of assessment practice has a direct bearing on the good standards achieved. A range of valid assessment tasks has been devised, each with a levelled mark scheme to facilitate diagnostic formative assessment and accurate reporting of pupil progress. Examples of pupils' work, sometimes self-assessed, feed into a progress file that pupils take with them when they leave school.
193. Subject leadership and management are excellent. PSHCE as a learning experience reflects the vision, passion and energy of its co-ordinator. Planning is meticulous; resources are largely purpose-made and of good quality. These are the keys to innovative teaching and effective learning. In addition, induction support and in-house training by the co-ordinator are responsible for the development of a strong specialist team that will carry the subject forward.
194. Citizenship is well represented in some teaching programmes, for example in design, science, modern foreign languages, history and geography but this is not true of all departments.
195. Potential weaknesses in provision caused by the absence of citizenship as a timetabled subject in Year 10 have been neutralised by several very well organised one-day conferences. According to research carried out by Newcastle University, this has had no adverse effect on continuity and progression in pupils' learning. This cannot be said, however, of the failure of some subject departments to deliver aspects of citizenship.

Example of outstanding practice

Use of the topical Israeli-Palestinian crisis to develop pupils' knowledge of the conflict, their skills of research and critical analysis, their ability to consider other peoples' experiences and their understanding of the complexity of conflict resolution on a global scale.

In a Year 11 higher ability class, a key question was set: 'What are the prospects for peace in Palestine?' A list of learning outcomes and assessment criteria were given to pupils, placed in small groups. The task of each group was to write, and later deliver, a speech that would offer a critically balanced answer to the key question. To do this, each group would take responsibility for researching one aspect of the problem – for example, the historical context, current developments, competing perspectives – using evidence displayed around the classroom. Each group would then send out 'envoys' to other groups, trading and exchanging information until they had enough to compose their own speeches.

At least four characteristics of highly successful teaching and learning were evident from the outset. These were, first, the 'performance' of the teacher, in particular the way in which he was able to make expert knowledge accessible to pupils by converting it into visual stimuli that could then be 'enlarged' by questioning that was both challenging and good-humoured. Second, was his meticulous planning, such that all the resources needed for research were carefully prepared and distributed around the room – for example, the BBC website projected on to the whiteboard for up-to-the-minute developments in the Palestinian crisis. The third was the sense of seriousness and purpose with which the pupils set about their research. Fourth, that assessment was very much an integral part of teaching and learning.

Everything was conducted at a healthy, productive pace – not a minute of the lesson was wasted. The quality of group discussion was impressive; opinions were confidently expressed, both to this third party and, later on, to the class as a whole. Written outcomes were similarly impressive, showing good knowledge of the origins of the Palestinian problem, critical awareness of the experiences and perspectives of both sides in the current conflict and the ability to propose resolutions of the conflict that were at once well informed and politically plausible. All pupils made serious progress during this lesson – and had a lot of enjoyment doing it.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine 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 2004 by Year 13 students, the latest year for which national comparisons are available. AS results for Year 13 students are only shown if the student did not continue the subject to A2-level.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	10	100	78.3	20	21.6	37.0	28.5
Biology	2	100	63.5	0	10.4	30.0	19.8
Business studies	5	40	75.3	20	15.4	14.0	25.7
Chemistry	1	100	70.3	0	13.2	30.0	23.0
Communication studies	3	66.7	87.2	66.7	24.9	33.3	32.8
Drama	2	100	86.6	0	19.8	35.0	30.9
English language	3	100	85.3	33.3	16.1	43.3	29.0
English literature	4	100	86.2	25.0	17.4	42.5	29.7
French	1	100	79.8	0	19.4	20.0	28.2
Design and technology	4	75	72.6	50	13.9	35.0	24.3
General studies	33	30.3	73.6	3	16.9	8.2	25.5
Geography	6	100	75.5	33.3	20.4	41.7	27.0
German	2	100	81.6	0	18.8	30.0	28.8
History	4	75	82.2	50	20.8	37.5	29.2
Mathematics	3	0	59.9	0	14.1	0	20.5
Other sciences	1	0	67.4	0	14.8	0	22.8
Physics	1	100	66.4	0	14.8	20.0	22.4
Sociology	2	100	72.1	0	19.6	25.0	25.9
Sports/PE studies	2	100	72.2	50	11.8	45.0	22.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	5	100	98.3	40	50.2	72.0	87.1
Biology	13	100	96.6	38.5	40	78.5	79.3
Business studies	10	100	98.9	20	39.4	80.0	81.8
Chemistry	4	100	97.7	50	50	80.0	85.7
Communication studies	1	100	99.2	0	40.4	80.0	83.5
Drama	1	100	99.6	100	42.8	100.0	85.1
English language	16	100	99.2	62.5	36.4	93.8	81.1

English literature	4	100	99.4	50	44.9	85.0	85.5
Design and technology	8	100	97.8	37.5	35.0	80.0	77.9
General studies	38	94.7	94.9	15.8	30.5	66.8	72.9
Geography	24	100	98.8	50	46.4	90.0	85.2
German	1	100	98.6	0	49.6	80.0	86.3
History	12	100	99.0	41.7	45.6	76.7	85.1
Mathematics	16	100	96.8	62.5	56.6	95.0	89.5
Other sciences	15	100	97.4	60	44.2	97.3	82.5
Other social studies	1	100	97.4	0	42.5	80.0	81.6
Physics	5	100	96.7	60	45.3	92.0	82.6
Sociology	7	100	98.5	28.6	45.3	82.9	84.6
Sports/PE studies	7	100	97.8	57.1	30.9	91.4	75.4
Health and social care	4	100	93.5	0	24.9	70.0	70.0
Science	10	100	89.9	20	10.2	78.0	58.9
Information technology VQ	9	83.3	88.3	55.6	26.9	77.8	67.8

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Courses in English language at AS and A2-level were fully inspected and those in English literature, French and German were sampled.

One Year 13 lesson of A2 English literature was sampled. Standards were above average and achievement was good. Teaching and learning were good. Students had been well prepared and the teacher had high expectations of students to discuss independently the use of tension in a scene from Shakespeare's "Othello" and then to present their ideas, comparing and contrasting the characters of Desdemona and Emilia. They did so confidently and articulately, showing perceptive understanding supported by appropriate textual references.

French and German are taught in collaboration with another school. This works well thanks to good communication on the part of the teachers concerned. This has a positive impact on learning through the increase in class sizes in Year 12. Two lessons were sampled, AS-level in French in Year 12 and A2-level in German in Year 13.

In French, the newly introduced provision is good, including good teaching, contact with a French *assistante* and opportunity for work experience in France. Learning and achievement are at present satisfactory but can be expected to improve with greater experience. In German, four students had taken AS-level in 2004. Standards were average. Both of those continuing to A2-level are achieving well, as compared with their AS-level outcomes. Their standards are average for A2-level. Teaching is good and extends the students' personal horizons through German language discussion of serious social issues. Study of German grammar is rigorous.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very thorough teaching and learning lead to very good student achievement.
- Students demonstrate very good independent research skills in their individual language studies.

- Very good leadership and management of a team of well qualified and experienced teachers result in high standards.
- The use of non-specialist classrooms sometimes means appropriate resources and reference books are not easily accessible.

Commentary

196. Standards are well above average. Results in A2-level English language examinations in 2004 were well above the national average. All students attained grades A-E and nearly two-thirds attained grades A or B. Results in AS-level English language examinations were also well above average. Standards seen are similarly well above average. Particularly impressive are the students' individual language studies, which demonstrate very high levels of independent research and study skills. Students' personal writing is also of a high standard with students showing a very good understanding of adapting language for different audiences. One student's radio script has been broadcast on Radio Cumbria. Although more female than male students choose the subject, there are no marked differences in their achievement, which is very good. Results vary from year to year but all students make very good progress measured against their prior attainment.
197. Teaching and learning over time are very good. Students receive a very good grounding in the vocabulary and concepts of the subject. They are provided with a stimulating variety of examples of language use. They are very well prepared with frameworks for discussion and given very helpful notes on background and context, for example on the historical development of language. Consequently they are able to analyse newly encountered texts with confidence and some authority. For example, Year 12 students were able to apply their previous learning about models of discourse and semantic fields to explore the language and conventions of e-mails. Teachers mark students' work very thoroughly giving detailed, helpful comments and targets for improvement. Students also benefit considerably from individual tutorials to support their chosen language studies. However, this is extremely demanding on teachers as class sizes increase. Some teaching groups are now too large. On the few occasions where teaching is less effective, teachers do not insist that lower attaining students participate more in whole class discussion, or allow them sufficient time to read and reflect before responding.
198. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject is taught by a well-qualified and experienced team of teachers, who have complementary areas of expertise. They have received good opportunities for professional development keeping them abreast of examination changes and requirements. Because some lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms away from the main English area, students do not always have access to appropriate reference books such as dictionaries and thesauruses, or displays reinforcing vocabulary and concepts.
199. Results in A-level English language examinations at the time of the previous inspection were low. Improvement since is very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

200. English language and literacy skills are above average. Students give confident, articulate oral explanations and presentations. They read widely and independently around the subjects they have chosen and are able to research independently. They write fluently and accurately, organising their ideas clearly.

MATHEMATICS

Although the focus of the inspection was on AS and A2-level mathematics, one lesson of further mathematics was sampled. This was a very good lesson and shows that students in the subject are achieving very well.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is excellent leadership and management.
- There are good relationships between teachers and students.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Effective use is made of homework to extend learning in class.
- ICT is used effectively when equipment is available.

Commentary

201. Results in both the AS and A2-level examinations over the last few years have been consistently well above the national average. Standards seen in lessons and observed in the scrutiny of work indicate that standards throughout Year 12 and Year 13 are above average. This was exemplified in a Year 12 lesson, when students were able to use algebraic methods to solve problems involving the difference of two squares, and a Year 13 lesson, when students were able to differentiate complex mathematical functions by the use of the chain rule. Compared with the standard on entry, this shows that achievement has been very good. Over recent years examination results have been maintained at their above average level, with male and female students doing equally well.
202. Teaching and learning are very good. It is always at least good and occasionally excellent. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. Lessons are well planned with variety and pace. There is rarely a time in a lesson when a teacher is not providing some valid form of input to the learning process. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to learn by asking probing, open-ended questions which give them a greater depth of understanding of the topic being studied. In an excellent Year 13 lesson, from careful teacher questioning, students were encouraged to extend for themselves their understanding of algorithms and, in turn, explain to others the depth of their understanding. Homework is set as a logical extension to the learning experience of lessons. Work is marked well with helpful comments, and students are aware of what they need to do to succeed. When the equipment is available, ICT is used with enthusiasm and to good effect. A Year 12 class were able to use information stored on an electronic whiteboard rapidly to review the progress of a two-hour lesson.
203. Students enjoy their lessons and are prepared to talk about the subject with enthusiasm. Lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of good humour and solid, hard work. Students are dedicated to their work and tend to remain on task for the whole of the lesson. Their responses to questioning show that they are understanding the work as they go along. Perceptive questions from students also indicate good understanding of the lessons. Students often make their own notes. Their files are neat and give an indication of the quantity and high standard of work, which has been produced this term. Students are kind to each other and are prepared to offer each other assistance if required. No one feels uneasy about offering an answer, which could be incorrect. In fact, the good-natured way in which the lessons are conducted tends to encourage a two-way interchange of information, which assists learning.
204. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. The head of department has a clear vision of where he wants the department to go and his dedicated team provide him with their full support. The department has regular meetings, which have teaching and learning as their focus; the outcomes of these go into improving the delivery of the subject. Schemes of work are fully in place and linked to a good assessment system, which allows both teachers and students to monitor progress and agree on future targets for learning. Monitoring of staff

is carried out on a regular basis with the results fed back to raise the standards within the department.

205. The improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

206. Standards of numeracy are above average overall. The importance given to the subject in earlier years means that students have a good basic grounding of numeracy for use in other subjects. For example, students in physics are able to calculate velocity and acceleration and are also able to work out the half-life of radioactive isotopes. Calculations are also evident in the design process for projects within the design and technology courses. In all subjects sampled, students were able to interpret data presented graphically and produce graphs from their own data.

SCIENCE

AS and A2-level courses were inspected in biology. In addition, physics, chemistry and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) science were sampled. Records of performance data were analysed and some lessons observed. Recently, relatively small numbers have taken A2 examinations in physics and chemistry. Results have varied from well above to matching the national averages. In both chemistry and physics, some students have gained the highest grade (A) and overall, achievement has been very good. The teaching and management are very good in both subjects. AVCE science is a recent addition to the curriculum. The first students took the full examination in 2003. Results in 2003 and 2004 were close to national norms and students achieved well. Very good teaching and management are rapidly establishing this course as a successful part of the post-16 curriculum.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Large numbers are opting for the AS-level course and a high proportion continuing on to A2-level.
- Leadership is good.
- Procedures for collating the results of assessment are underdeveloped.

Commentary

207. In recent years, relatively small numbers have taken the A2-level examination. Results have varied from well above the national averages in 2002, to below in 2003. In 2004, a larger number of candidates gained results that matched the national figures for 2003. Comparisons of individual students' results with their performance at GCSE show that in each year, the great majority match or exceed expectations. Overall this represents good achievement that is shared by males and females. The present Year 13 students are all in line to pass the examination and over half are working at standards that should guarantee a higher grade (A or B). All, for example, have a good grasp of natural selection and many a detailed knowledge of the macro-structure of the kidney. Overall, they are achieving well.

208. In both 2003 and 2004, a good number took the AS-level examinations. Over half in each year gained a higher grade and only one student failed. The very low failure rate compares well to the situation in many schools. The 23 students currently in Year 12 have made a good start to the work. All are coping with the demands of post-16 studies and most are achieving well. One group were observed doing experimental work with the enzyme catalase, extracted from fresh liver. Their understanding of scientific method and practical skills ensured success.

209. Teaching is very good. Excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm are engendering abiding interest in students. Very good relationships between teachers and students and amongst the students themselves add much to learning. Group work gives students opportunities to discuss concepts; this helps them to clarify their ideas and to recognise any weaknesses in learning. Increasingly adventurous and stimulating teaching methodology is leading to more independent and active learning. This approach was exemplified by a Year 13 lesson on evolution, where students had to work out survival rates for rats with different genotypes. Good quality experimental work is well supported by the high quality resources provided by excellent technicians.
210. Leadership is good. The head of department ably leads a team of very dedicated teachers who are all striving to improve the provision. Overall, management systems are satisfactory. Various factors have created a very complex arrangement for teaching Year 12. A combination of large numbers, timetable constraints and staffing considerations has resulted in classes being shared by several teachers. One group has lessons with four teachers. Co-ordinating the work of different teachers and ensuring that students receive a coherent learning experience is very difficult indeed. The head of department, well supported by colleagues, is currently managing to counteract the potentially damaging effect of this unusual arrangement.
211. All teachers assess students' attainment at regular intervals using criteria based on national standards. There is currently no convenient system for drawing together this data. This lack compromises the tracking of individual progress towards targets and limits the monitoring of teaching.
212. Little mention was made of this subject at the last inspection. Overall, standards have been maintained, numbers have risen and teaching has improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school offers a vocational (AVCE) course in information technology. This was fully inspected

Information and communication technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment by the end of Year 13 is above average.
- The teaching of ICT is good.
- Students' achievement is good in relation to prior attainment.
- Company links, as a resource for the AVCE IT course, are underdeveloped.
- There are insufficient electronic resources at the present time to support studies across the curriculum.

Commentary

213. Attainment on the AVCE IT course is above the national average and has risen over the last two years. The current standard of work seen in Year 12 is in line with the national average, but in Year 13 it is above average, indicating a good rate of progress that occurs over the two years. Students can design and create forms, tables, queries and reports in a thorough and confident approach to creating a customer database. Students can explain how they define relationships between the fields in different tables and how the design of queries affects the way that reports are displayed. Students can develop a project around the performance of a company, analysing hardware requirements, creating a time plan, etc., and creating and documenting an ICT solution. Attention is paid to each step of a project.

214. Students begin this course with relatively modest grades at GCSE, but their capability increases over time to target the higher grades in most cases. Achievement is therefore good overall for this subject and very good for particular pupils. This high rate of progress is due to good teacher subject expertise and a thorough approach to interpreting subject performance requirements and ensuring that students know what they need to do to achieve the higher grades.
215. Teaching is good at this level. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and managed to provide a good balance of teacher input and student learning. A projection screen is effectively used in lessons to demonstrate, for example, complex features of a database. Relationships are friendly and businesslike and students' attitudes to their work are excellent. Students have a good approach to researching a subject. They use the Internet effectively as a resource and use sources to assemble work that answers set questions with illustrative detail. Well-designed handouts support the learning of theoretical work, which underpins practical studies.
216. Coursework in Year 13 is of a good standard and in many cases shows a good commitment from students to presenting their best work.
217. Students have less opportunity to make use of links with local industry and commercial organisations than in many other schools which offer this vocational course. Teachers simulate the interviews with client organisations on which projects are based. The absence of contacts with real source material is a weakness of this course.
218. The management of ICT is good at this level, despite the lack of company and organisational links as a resource for the AVCE IT course. Coursework requirements have been translated into effective support materials for students. The approach ensures good progress is made throughout the course towards the higher range of grades.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

219. There is an ICT room with Internet access in the sixth form block, which students can use for their studies. There is a further small area with computers in the school library, which is reserved for sixth form students. They make good use of these ICT resources as well as ICT they have at home for creating their coursework assignments. Students make thoughtful use of the Internet when researching a topic. However, there are relatively few specifically selected, subject-related electronic resources available to support studies at this level at the present time.

HUMANITIES

220. AS and A2-level courses in geography and psychology were fully inspected and courses in history and sociology were sampled.
221. History in the sixth form shares the same strengths as the main school. Standards are clearly above average in both year groups. Achievement is similarly good because lower attaining students are given access to complex material in interesting ways. These students find it difficult to separate narrative from argument. However, the extended written work of students of all abilities in both year groups is unusually well structured and displays impressive subject knowledge. All of this reflects very good teaching. Teaching is very well informed and inspired by the same principles as elsewhere in the school – notably a desire to give students responsibility for their own learning and a degree of ownership of the outcomes. Much use is made of data capturing and mind-mapping techniques. On the whole, students are less confident orally than in their written work
222. Provision for sociology is good. It is dependent on the sixth form link between Caldew and Morton schools. Students from both schools collaborate well and speak positively about the link in practice. Standards are in line with national norms and students make good progress,

given sometimes modest prior attainment and the need to familiarise themselves with a new subject. Written work of Year 12 students on drug abuse shows good, critical understanding of research methodology. That of Year 13 students working on different definitions of poverty shows clear understanding of the difference between relative and absolute measures. In a lesson observed, Year 12 students made effective class presentations dealing with aspects of racial stereotyping and incorporating video. In written work, these students can discuss critically the relationship between media violence and crime and they speak with growing confidence about issues associated with gender and identity. Teaching is assured, well informed and good humoured. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and their attitudes to learning are very good.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average. Compared to their previous attainment, students achieve very well.
- The department has made excellent progress since the previous inspection.
- Very good teaching challenges students, so that they quickly make the transition from GCSE to AS and A2-level.
- Students enjoy geography and work hard.
- Fieldwork is well integrated into the course.
- The effectiveness of the links with Morton School has yet to be monitored.

Commentary

223. Geography is a popular sixth form subject. A minimum of grade C at GCSE is normally required for entry to sixth form geography courses. However, students who are interested and show commitment are regularly accepted with lower grades. Such pupils, previously reported as wrongly placed, now gain much from the course. From this modest start, students make very good progress. A2-level results in 2003 were above the average for similar schools. Girls outperformed boys but no more so than their prior attainment would suggest. In 2004, all but two of the 26 candidates exceeded their target grade. These standards represent a very significant improvement since the previous report. A-level results were then described as poor and in decline.
224. Very good teaching drives learning and contributes to the high achievement. Teachers deliver those parts of the syllabus which particularly interest them. Lessons have variety. Fieldwork is well integrated. The use of well-resourced case studies brings reality to lessons. Learning is moved along by well-paced and well-structured lessons. Consequently, students enjoy geography. Nearly all complete the full two-year course. Several continue geography into higher education. Students relate very well to each other. Relationships with teachers are relaxed and productive. Students know how well they are doing, how well they should be doing and how to improve. They have a mature attitude to their studies. Students rise to the teachers' high expectations of them and are happy to accept responsibility for some of their learning. They are well prepared for such work. This independent learning broadens their understanding. Therefore, they quickly make the transition from GCSE to AS and A2-level and are well equipped to benefit from future learning opportunities.
225. Lessons are well planned. Students are challenged by the depth and detail in which units are studied. A Year 13 class, for example, revised work on glaciation through maps and photographs of the Jostedal Ice Cap of Norway. The teacher had first-hand knowledge of the area. Aided by a well-constructed worksheet, students discovered for themselves what a glacial landscape looks like. They could understand how and why the processes were shaping the landscape. Their ability to use aerial photographs, tying images to small-scale

maps, was enhanced. What drove learning were the demands made of students and the teacher's well-judged assumption that they would rise to the challenge he had set them. A Year 12 class enjoyed a well-paced lesson on the monsoon. Students achieved very well because they were interested and engaged throughout. The tasks were challenging. Light hearted and entertaining methods were used to ensure accuracy in the application of terminology.

226. Leadership and management are very good. The department's performance is well monitored. Experienced staff regularly update and research their aspects of the subject and share a commitment to the raising of standards still further. The link with Morton School rationalizes A-level provision in the area. It exposes Caldew students to a different learning environment. The ways in which this new link affects standards and opportunities have yet to be monitored.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in examinations in Year 13 have been above the national average in recent years.
- Good teaching provides resources that link the wide range of studies undertaken. This supports students' ability to summarise many of the underlying theories.
- The lack of an audit of departmental needs is hampering development and reducing the impact of strategies being used to bring about improvements.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory. It is not a suitable base for students to access primary and secondary materials to further their research and interests.

Commentary

227. Achievement in Year 12 is good. Recent trends in results of the AS-level examinations have shown an even distribution of grades, with a number of students achieving the higher levels. There are presently a large numbers of students following the psychology AS-level course in Year 12. They are motivated learners and the majority are working at levels expected at this stage of the course. These students are able confidently to evaluate the impact of various theories and empirical evidence on cognitive, humanistic, psychodynamic and behavioural aspects of psychology. Essays on the humanistic approaches show a good understanding of the use of counselling but inconsistently refer to the empirical studies they have covered in lessons. The achievement of Year 13 students is good. The results of the 2003 A2-level examinations were above the national average and 2004 results follow a similar trend. During this period many students have achieved very well by obtaining the top grades, often exceeding their targets by two grades. Present Year 13 students are achieving similarly. Folders and essays show a good understanding of the contemporary issues relating to natural giftedness. They use this understanding well in lessons by further considering empirical evidence on thought processing to explain the phenomena of 'giftedness.'
228. Teaching is good. Good links are made between substantive topics studied and the teacher provides very useful resource materials that help students cross-reference these areas. Such resources are instrumental in helping students compile well-organised folders. These reflect annotated key issues and help students gather selected evidence and conclusions that aid their writing. In lessons, very good use is made of a bank of resources that effectively summarises theoretical models and significantly helps students acquire new knowledge of concepts, theories and empirical evidence. Homework is set regularly and is a relevant extension of their learning. However, students are rarely expected to present their findings at their next lessons and too many display a lack of ability or reluctance to discuss theoretical studies further. The essays of students are well marked showing clearly the strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement needed, especially the objective analysis needed to

secure higher marks. They are used well in lessons to set next-stage targets and connections to new theories and topics. There are relevant individual records of student achievement and expectations for their A2-level examinations. Teaching is better when these are used to present appropriate challenges in lessons. For example, when questioning is directed to individuals, or when small groups of students are expected to complete mini-research topics and present their findings. At other times, further teaching strategies are needed to enable students to make more confident contributions and to use a wider range of texts and sources to learn for themselves. There is presently a lack of procedures to evaluate all the information that has a bearing on achievement. This is especially the case in the use of baseline information on entry to Year 12 and subsequent progress on the AS-level course. This is now crucial with large student numbers.

229. This relatively new course is satisfactorily administered. A well-qualified and enthusiastic teacher is teaching all the Year 12 and 13 groups and managing admirably with a fast growing student population, hence the good standards. However, there is presently a lack of leadership. There are not the managerial procedures in place to drive future provision and to set an agenda for auditing and future planning. Teaching has been monitored within performance management procedures. This has provided very useful information to improve teaching and learning further, but has yet to resulting a more varied approach in lessons. Further professional development is needed for this to happen. Over-large AS-level groups, unsatisfactory accommodation and a lack of resources that restrict analysis of research and media interests are all having a detrimental affect on learning. The use of ICT is not presently an integral part of teaching and learning. Students are not using this medium enough to research topics and insufficient use is made of the school intranet to furnish websites, relevant studies or to extend some of the very useful notes and summarised headings given to the students in lessons. At this stage of the development of the course insufficient use is made of enrichment activities, such as visits and conferences, to enhance learning further.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Technology – product design

Provision in product design is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of students' work is well above average, overall.
- Standards in examinations are improving year on year and more students are choosing the subject.
- Recent examination passes indicate high achievement.
- Teaching and learning are excellent.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent.
- Computer-assisted machining facilities are too limited to support further improvements in standards.

Commentary

230. Standards in examinations are rising and more students are taking the course. In 2002, standards for the five students at A2-level were average. Ten students took AS-level that year, but only two carried on to A2-level in 2003. Although both passed, neither attained a higher grade. In 2004, 23 students took AS-level and nine, A2-level. Results at both AS and A2-level showed a significant improvement. A third achieved grade A or B at A2-level, in line with national averages and results at AS-level were above average. More importantly, 2004 results set against the prior attainment of students at GCSE are very positive and indications are that students' achievement was high. Typically there have been few females on the course so comparisons of male and female performance are not possible.

231. Standards of current work are well above average overall; no 'weak' design portfolios were seen, all were at least average, most above and several outstanding. The best made significant use of ICT to help convey students' evaluations of existing products and the developmental points of their design. Digital images are cleverly used. Some thought has gone into them so that they are not just snapshots; they convey a lot of information. Hand sketches and aided drawings are also often of a very high standard; the very best have a real designer 'feel' to them and are at undergraduate level. Annotations to design ideas are a particular strength; students' notes reflect their very good thinking skills and considerable research into the project in hand.
232. Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They have been fostered by the excellent relationships with staff that were developed when they were younger. Retention is good and the course is increasingly popular. However, until recently, many students chose not to continue the course beyond AS-level. Students enjoy the course and are glad they are doing it though, they say, they have to work very hard.
233. Teaching and learning are excellent and for very similar reasons to those explained in the commentary of the 11-16 design and technology report; sixth form teachers all teach 11-16 design and technology. Expectations of students are very high; both of standards of work and through demanding workloads. When potential students are in Years 10 and 11 they are treated like sixth form students and have access to departmental resources and technician time and so current students take it for granted when they enter the sixth form. They are used to working very hard and continue to do so in the sixth form. Students enjoy more discussion with staff about their work than they perhaps had when younger though increasing class sizes shortens the time available to individuals in lessons. However, all staff put themselves out to provide support to students outside of lessons if they need it. Assessment of students' work is continuous. Each section of their portfolios is assessed against examination criteria and students have opportunities to revisit work to improve it; they are very well aware of how well they are doing and how to improve. Assessment is excellent.
234. Leadership and management, as at 11-16, are both excellent. In the sixth form an added feature of both leadership and management is team teaching. This is used when appropriate to utilise specific staff interests or skills, for example, environmental impact of design or high-level computer graphics. Such expertise can be used to the benefit of all students and also shared with other teachers, so teachers' knowledge and understanding of course requirements broaden. Large student groups can also be better served by generic skills teaching and then they can split to pursue more focused activities which have limited resources, for example plastic moulding. The subject team leader is also adept at analysing examination performance to set appropriate targets, often challenging, to help ensure they meet predicted grades. Other comparisons, contrasting performance between different groups, different teachers and so on, help ensure achievement is very high and examination performances improve.
235. Accommodation for the sixth form students is very good overall; but lacks a space just dedicated to them to display their work and available as a design studio. This would enable them see each other's work develop and the increasing assessment burden for teachers would be eased; it is easier to walk round stands and assess displayed work. It would also be excellent preparation for design-related courses at university. Resources are good. ICT software is up-to-date but computers are not state-of-the-art design machines and there are no large flat panel displays to help view designs and reduce eye-strain. Though there is plenty of computer-assisted design support, computer-assisted machining is limited and large-scale work, or even medium-scale, cannot be produced.
236. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The school is a business and enterprise college and product design supports this venture as all projects and products are client based; students have to investigate client needs and work to a brief. The department has recently

forged links with a company that makes metal containers, but other links with local or regional industries, such as engineering and catering, have yet to be developed.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

237. No courses in visual and performing arts and media were inspected in full. Students are offered a range of courses, many of which are fully or partially taught in other schools or colleges. Those in art and design, music and music technology were sampled. Students studying theatre studies and film studies were spoken to about their work.
238. In an A2-level lesson in art and design, the teacher gave good individual advice, spending considerable amounts of time with each student. Demonstrations of how to draw effectively in ink over a base of smudged chalk were effective, and created good levels of interest. The pace of the lesson was good overall, and students made good gains in their media handling skills. Learning was good as a result. In the work of the small number of students taking the course, standards are below average, but their achievement is satisfactory.
239. Theatre studies is taught at the Cumbria Institute of Arts. Generous curriculum provision enables students to work on performing projects for extended periods. Students value the support they receive from teachers in terms of assessment and know how they can improve and develop their work. Students' learning is enriched by theatre visits and workshops. Insufficient access to performance spaces prior to examination presentations does not allow for sufficient preparation of technical rehearsal. Film studies is also taught at the College of Art.
240. In Year 12, AS-level music is timetabled partly after school. Very good teaching results in students being able to analyse complex scores of the Baroque period displaying a secure knowledge of compositional devices, such as use of harmony, counterpoint and texture and how they are used in Bach's Brandenburg concertos. Prior knowledge is reinforced by a variety of teaching methods and students receive individual support and challenge within each lesson resulting in very good achievement. Focus on the process of essay writing also enables the development of examination techniques.
241. In Year 13, students follow the music technology course together with students from Morton School, where they receive tuition in the practical elements of the course. Progress of students in these elements is carefully monitored. In theoretical lessons, students analyse set songs in great depth and are able to express perceptive descriptions of how the meaning of the lyrics are enhanced and communicated by the music, identifying aurally a variety of textures, timbres, use of symbolism and improvisation. They display a secure knowledge and understanding of the pieces they are studying and the musical devices used.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

242. The school offers an AVCE in leisure and recreation and AS and A-2 level physical education. In addition, all students in Year 12 have a session of physical education timetabled, with a wide choice of activities available. The leisure and recreation course was not inspected as it is taught at Morton School. The small entries in previous years have achieved average results.
243. The provision for AS and A2-level physical education was sampled. Present Year 13 students are making good progress towards higher grades. Excellent teaching to this group greatly improved their literacy skills and enabled them to complete and make good sense of comparative exercises on the impact of sport in different societies. After initial complications with partner institutions the present AS course has a much larger and more viable group. The department has a good understanding of the abilities of students on entry to the sixth form. They have good assessment procedures to track their progress and set challenging targets for all students.

BUSINESS

The AS and A2-level courses in business studies were fully inspected. The courses in law were sampled. An intermediate level vocational in retail and distribution is also taught but was not observed. In the AS-level examination in law in 2004, around a third of students gained the higher grades A or B and around two-thirds passed. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above that which would be expected nationally. The teaching is very good.

Business studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good.
- The achievement of students is good.
- Information technology is used well in the learning.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to visit and experience a wider range of work place situations.

Commentary

244. At the end of Year 13, in 2003, about a third of students attained grades A or B at A2-level and all passed. Results were below average compared to national figures. In 2004, the proportion of higher grades remained low, but half attained grade C and no-one attained less than grade D. However, the standards seen during the inspection are above those expected nationally. The students have a good knowledge and understanding both of business generally, and of the many issues that surround the process of setting up a business. They can make intelligent contributions to the decision-making process involved in the locating of a business. They understand the importance of considering the costs involved in the setting up, as well as the need to source possible grants to fund the venture. Students can also plan a marketing strategy for a new product. They understand the concept of a marketing-mix as well as knowing the importance of being able to 'read' the market in order to make the most of emerging trends. Students have some first-hand knowledge of actual business situations but it is currently insufficient and this is an area identified for further development. Students have strong information technology skills. They can use it effectively to both extend the knowledge needed for the course and to process the knowledge they have already acquired. Their written skills are good, as is their mental reasoning. Overall, the achievement of the students is good. Good support in the class and the nature of the assignments enables students of all abilities to make good progress.
245. Overall, the teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned and they include a wide range of learning objectives. The teachers are confident in the subject matter and so learning is clear and the students cover a lot of ground in the time available. Occasionally, more could be done to encourage a wider range of students to participate in the lessons as at times just a few students predominate. The teaching encourages students to relate their learning to current affairs and to reflect on how domestic and world events might have an effect on economic and business issues. Students have some contacts with businesses but it is not always first-hand and so their learning would be strengthened by more opportunities being given to visit and experience actual business situations. The teaching makes good use of information technology as an aid to learning. The teaching makes a good contribution to developing students' numeracy skills. The students work hard in the lessons.
246. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The staffing is very good. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The accommodation is good. New accommodation is in the process of development. The resources are good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject co-ordinator is a very good leader and manager of the department.
- Teachers demonstrate very good specialist knowledge.
- Teachers' high expectations of all students promote a good level of achievement.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular enhancement and input from professionals in the caring services.

Commentary

247. Students take either the single or double award AVCE in health and social care. In 2003, standards at the end of Year 13 were average. Results from the small entry in 2004 were similar. However, this represents good achievement in relation to levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form. Students acquire knowledge, which is regularly applied to examination questions to test their understanding and familiarise them with the examination format. Extended writing in the 'Equal Opportunities and Clients' Rights' unit on such topics as the effects of labelling on a child, tests and consolidates knowledge and understanding. In Year 12, students are quickly introduced to the skills of independent research and enquiry required for the course. They formulate hypotheses, organise meetings, interviews and placements in order to collect evidence for analysis for their communication and child development portfolios. These activities not only develop the necessary skills but increase confidence and motivate the students at an early stage of the course.
248. Achievement at the end of Year 13 is good because the students are self-motivated, see the relevance of the course to future career choices and, because of high teacher expectations, work hard. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to explain units very clearly to develop students' understanding of the work. By referring back regularly to each unit's assessment criteria in the lessons, building up model answers with the students and providing very strong support, teachers ensure that all students make progress.
249. Very strong specialist knowledge and very good quality teaching, together with very good relationships, ensure all students gain confidence, learn and achieve in a supportive and purposeful learning atmosphere. Working in groups, for example, students researched the requirements of individuals with diet-related disorders, consolidating their learning and developing their communication skills and their ability to select and synthesise information for a presentation to give to the whole group. Throughout the activity, the teacher made timely interventions to reinforce good points and suggest other areas for consideration. Students' personal development is secured through the very effective promotion of independent learning, especially through work placements. Teaching is least effective, though still satisfactory, when the lesson lacks structure and the pace of learning slows. Students are well organised, keen, responsible and mature in their outlook and dedicated in their attitudes to learning. Assessment is ongoing and progress is tracked both formally and informally. The teachers know their students well, give verbal feedback in lessons and keep them informed about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
250. There is a good range of extra-curricular enhancement, work placements and input from professionals associated with the caring services. The enhancement ranges from links with local care homes, speakers from caring organisations and visits to such places as the local Mobility Centre and Great Ormond Street Hospital. These, as well as giving the students first-hand experience of related occupations and care settings and helping them to formulate career plans, consolidate their learning and motivate them in their studies.

251. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator strives constantly for improvement and is an excellent role model for both staff and students. She manages and motivates an ever changing team very effectively, encouraging and supporting the staff wholeheartedly. The strengths identified in the last inspection have been built on and there is every indication that under the co-ordinator's committed leadership and skilful management this successful and increasingly popular course will go from strength to strength.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

252. All pupils study general studies. Only one lesson was observed. This was a religious studies element of the course. There is no discrete religious education timetabled in the sixth form. Those pupils who follow the full A2-level course in general studies achieve above average results. About a third complete the course only up to AS-level. Their results tend to be below average.
253. Provision for religious education is poor. Statutory requirements are not being met. Progress on this since the last inspection is poor. Teaching seen during the inspection was unsatisfactory. There is insufficient work on which to make judgements about standards and progress.

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	2	2
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
Overall standards achieved		2
Pupils' achievement	2	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	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		2

The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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