

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CARDINAL NEWMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

Brighton

LEA area: Brighton and Hove

Unique reference number: 114611

Headteacher: Mr Peter Evans OBE

Lead inspector: Dr Vivien Johnston

Dates of inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004

Inspection number: 268766

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: Voluntary aided  
Age range of students: 11 to 18  
Gender of students: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1990

School address: The Upper Drive  
Hove  
East Sussex  
Postcode: BN3 6ND

Telephone number: 01273 558551  
Fax number: 01273 508778

Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr Tad Matus

Date of previous inspection: May 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Cardinal Newman Catholic School is much larger than most other schools. It takes boys and girls from a wide area of Brighton and Hove. About three quarters are Roman Catholic, and the rest are from other Christian backgrounds. They come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds which, overall, are advantaged compared to the national picture. About a fifth of the students are from minority ethnic groups, the most numerous being Black British or mixed background. About a tenth of the students speak English as an additional language, which is more than in most schools. Almost all are fluent in English, but a very small number need extra help. Student mobility is low as the vast majority stay at the school for the whole of their education from Year 7 to Year 13. Overall, the attainment of the students on entry to Year 7 is above the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is lower than in most schools, as is the proportion with a statement of special need. The school won school achievement awards in 2001, 2002 and 2003.

The sixth form is much larger than in most schools. Overall, the attainment of sixth formers on entry to Year 12 is average because the school sets the relatively low minimum requirement of five GCSEs at grade C.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8402	Vivien Johnston	Lead inspector	
19653	Libby Dickson	Lay inspector	
24142	Sylvia Argyle	Team inspector	English 11 -16; sixth form English
31192	John Stewart	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-16
33525	Pam Fearnley	Team inspector	Science 11-16; sixth form biology
18072	Joan Stephens	Team inspector	Sixth form mathematics and ICT
29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector	Sixth form chemistry
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design 11-16; sixth form art and design
35060	Keith Robinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) 11-16
32590	Roger Fenwick	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-16
18663	Phillip Burchell	Team inspector	Geography 11-16; sixth form geography
27058	Kathleen Cannon	Team inspector	History 11-16; sixth form history
33242	Stephen Wall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages 11-16; sixth form German
34084	Mary Davis	Team inspector	Music 11-16
23307	Neil McDonough	Team inspector	Physical education 11-16; sixth form physical education
2652	Robin Lomas	Team inspector	Sixth form psychology; special educational needs
27226	Richard Cribb	Team inspector	Citizenship 11-16
31682	Anne-Marie Storey	Team inspector	Sixth form French
2447	Faysal Mikdadi	Team inspector	Arabic 11-16; English as an additional language
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Work-related education 11-16; sixth form business education
34089	Robin Gaff	Team inspector	

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the school and the value for money it provides are very good.** The school has a very strong ethos and is a learning community in which everyone is encouraged and helped to be successful. Students do very well academically and in their wider, personal development. The school is very popular locally.

The school's main strengths are

- Students achieve very well as a result of very good specialist teaching, and because the curriculum offers very good opportunities that meet students' varied needs
- The school's ethos is excellent, reflecting the students' very good attitudes and behaviour, and the high quality of care, guidance and support provided by staff
- Parents and students are very happy with what the school offers
- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership, and so a desire for learning and improvement permeates the way the school works

**The school's improvement since the last inspection is very good.** The school responded very purposefully to the key issues identified by the last inspection. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is much better, and is being further developed as part of on-going improvements to the accommodation. Statutory requirements are met, and the curricular arrangements for science are now better. Many other developments have contributed to students doing increasingly well academically, including a recent focus on learning as part of the school's very successful implementation of the National Strategy for students in Years 7 to 9.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

**Students' achievement is very good overall.** It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Standards are above the national average by the end of Year 9, and well above average in Year 11 and Year 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 do particularly well in art and design, Arabic, German and history. Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science and students achieve well in these subjects. Results in the 2003 tests at the end of Year 9 were above average overall. They were above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. The results of the Year 9 tests and GCSE results went up further in 2004.

**The school provides excellently for students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development,** and so relationships and the school's ethos are excellent. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their attendance is above average.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided by the school is very good.**

**Teaching and learning are very good overall**, being good in Years 7 to 9 and very good thereafter. Students in all year groups respond very positively to their teachers' high expectations. Teachers have very good subject expertise, and prepare students very well for the GCSE and A-level examinations through interesting and relevant work that the students enjoy doing.

The curriculum is very good, with a wide range of GCSE options that build very well on the work of previous years. The range of extra-curricular activities, visits and other enrichment opportunities is excellent. Very good care, guidance and support are provided, including for students with special educational needs. Strong links are made with parents, who are very supportive of the school and their children's learning, and with other schools to enhance the educational provision for the students.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The headteacher's excellent leadership sets the tone for the rest of the school. Other staff provide very good leadership, and manage their areas of responsibility very well. The governing body is a very effective and skilled group that works very well with the school, to continue to improve the education it provides. The school has a very clear idea of its strengths and priorities for future development, and inspection findings agreed with almost all the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation prior to the inspection.

## **PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and students are both very satisfied with what the school provides. Parents feel very positive about almost all areas of the school's work. Though a small minority of parents would like a wider range of extra-curricular activities to be provided, the inspection found that what is available is excellent. A small minority of parents feel that homework provision is inconsistent; but the inspection found that good use is generally made of homework. Students feel that the school is very good, that they are well cared for and that their teachers expect high standards of them. Students in the sixth form are especially positive about the school and the many opportunities it provides for them.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The inspection found that all aspects of the school's work are satisfactory or better, with the vast majority being good or better. The inspection has identified no major issues for the school's improvement. A few minor issues that do not apply across the school are noted in the relevant sections of the full report.





## THE SIXTH FORM AT CARDINAL NEWMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The sixth form is much larger than most other school sixth forms. It offers a very wide range of subjects, mostly at A-level.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and its cost-effectiveness are very good.** Students are accepted into the sixth form if they have five or more GCSEs at grade C or better, an entry requirement that is lower than that for many other sixth forms. The school provides every encouragement to enable students to succeed academically and in their personal development.

The main strengths are

- Students achieve very well, and standards are above average by the end of Year 13
- Teaching is expert and stimulating, and so students learn very well
- An excellent range of subjects is available to sixth form students
- Students are highly satisfied with all that the school provides for them, both academically and in their guidance and support

### 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	<b>Good</b> in English. Standards attained in English literature are above the national average and students achieve well because of good teaching and very effective assessment of their learning. <b>Good</b> in French. Standards are above average. Students achieve well and enjoy their course. <b>Very good</b> in German. Standards attained are well above average and students achieve very well. Teaching is very good, with high expectations that encourage high standards. Students enjoy their studies.
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory</b> in mathematics. Standards are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge.
Science	<b>Very good</b> in biology. Standards attained are well above average. Students are achieving very well as a result of very good teaching and constructive feedback on their work. <b>Good</b> in chemistry. Standards are average and students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the course. Leadership is very good, and the subject is increasingly popular.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	<b>Very good</b> in ICT. Standards are well above average. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and the challenging lessons encourage very good learning.
Humanities	<b>Very good</b> in geography. Standards are well above average. Students achieve very well because they receive very good individual support from their teachers. <b>Excellent</b> in history. Students achieve standards that are well above average as a result of excellent teaching. <b>Very good</b> in psychology. Students achieve very well and standards are well above average. Psychology is a very popular subject, with a well-designed course.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Excellent</b> in art and design. Examination results are very high. Students cover a very broad curriculum and achieve excellently in both art and design and photography. Leadership is outstanding.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and	<b>Good</b> in physical education. Students achieve well, and standards are

travel	average. Teaching is stimulating and challenges students to discuss issues.
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Curriculum area	Evaluation
Business	<b>Very good</b> in business education. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. The department manages the course very well and leadership is strong. Links with local businesses are good.

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

### **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The advice, guidance and support provided for students are very good. Individual needs are identified and met, and students are given very helpful advice on the next steps in their education.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.** The staff are strongly committed to ensuring that students become independent learners and develop leadership qualities, and the sixth form is managed efficiently and successfully.

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are very positive indeed about the sixth form. They feel that the teaching is excellent and that they are given every help and encouragement to do well. They are highly motivated, and enjoy their work.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, standards are above average and students' achievement is very good. In Years 7 to 9, standards are above average and students achieve well. In Years 10 and 11, students do very well and so standards and GCSE results are well above average. In the sixth form, students also do very well and standards are above average.

#### Main strengths

- GCSE results are well above the national average
- Students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11
- A-level results are above average as students achieve very well in the Year 12 and 13 courses
- Standards in the most successful subjects are being maintained, and are rising in other subjects
- Students' literacy skills make a strong contribution to their examination success

#### Commentary

1. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen faster than nationally since the last inspection in 1999. Overall, the 2003 results were above the average for all schools nationally. They were also above average compared to schools in which students gained similar results in the Year 6 tests three years earlier. Students did best in English as these results were above average, whereas the mathematics and science results were average. Boys tended to do better than girls, in comparison with boys' and girls' results nationally. In 2004, the results rose further especially in English and mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.7 (35.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.1 (36.5)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.3 (34.5)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 329 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. GCSE results rose in line with the national trend in results between 1999 and 2003. The 2003 results were well above the national average overall, and in the percentage gaining five or more grades A\* to C, five or more grades A\* to G and one or more grade A\* to G. The results were well above average compared to schools in which students had gained similar Year 9 results two years previously. In 2004, the results rose further. For example, 77% gained five or more A\* to C grades.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	66 (61)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	39.6 (38.8)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 328 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Students did particularly well in German and history in 2003, as in both subjects the proportion gaining grades A\* or A was unusually high. Other subjects in which the results at A\* to C were significantly above those nationally were art and design, science, English, English literature, geography, mathematics, music and physical education. In 2004, students were particularly successful in Arabic, art and design and geography as in each of these over 90% of the students who took the examination gained grade C or better.
4. Overall, the standards attained by students are above the expectation for this stage of Year 9, and well above the expectation for this stage of Year 11. Students continue to be successful in the subjects in which GCSE results have been highest. These subjects include Arabic, art and design, German, geography and history. The quality of students' work in other subjects is rising, including in mathematics and science. This is most noticeable where teachers have adapted their teaching in line with the suggestions of the National Strategy for students in Years 7 to 9.
5. Students' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. The difference is related to the slightly higher quality of teaching of the older year groups, and students' increasing maturity and confidence in their studies. The standard of students' skills in literacy, shown in their written work, is well above average. This reflects teachers' very good focus on developing students' vocabulary, their skills in reading with understanding, and their knowledge of how to write successfully in each subject. It makes a strong contribution to the students' success at GCSE.
6. Students with special educational needs achieve equally well as other groups of students. For example, their GCSE results in English and mathematics were well above the grades predicted from their Year 9 test results. This success results from the very good support these students are given. In particular, their individual education plans help teachers to provide appropriate work in lessons and the work of the special needs team is caring and sensitive.
7. The attainment and achievement of students with English as an additional language are similar to those of other students. The majority are fluent in English, but a few are at an early stage of learning the language and a further group are competent orally but still need some help in reading and writing English. Some of these students take GCSE Arabic, and tend to do better in this subject than in their other subjects. This is partly because of their relative weakness in the use of English, but also because in some lessons they are not actively encouraged to participate in discussions and to respond to questions.
8. The standards achieved by students from ethnic minority groups are similar to those of other students. Higher-attaining students also do well in Years 7 to 9, and very well thereafter. In all cases, this is because the school takes care to respond to individual needs, and tracks individual students' performance systematically.

### **Sixth Form**

9. Sixth form students' examination results were above average overall in 2003, and better than in the previous year. The subjects in which results were well above average include art and design, biology, business studies, design and technology, geography and physics. Results in chemistry and sociology were below average, and the English results were well below average. The results for 2004 rose further in many subjects. Chemistry, sociology and English results went up very considerably. Students also did very well in psychology. However, it is not possible to compare the school's most recent A-level result with those of schools nationally because national data for 2004 are unavailable. This is also the case for Year 9 and GCSE results.
10. Overall, the standards attained in the sixth form are above average. The school's comparatively open access to sixth form studies means that some students enter Year 12

courses with relatively low GCSE grades. Although many sixth form students have done very well at GCSE, the overall attainment at the start of Year 12 is average. The school's analysis of the 2004 results shows that over the last three years students have done particularly well in art and design, photography, media studies, drama, biology, psychology, business studies and ICT. The inspection found that students are continuing to be successful in these subjects. The current focus on enhancing students' learning by adopting the approaches of the National Strategy for students in Years 7 to 9 throughout the school has had a very beneficial impact on the standards achieved in many sixth form subjects.

11. The very small number of students with special educational needs in the sixth form achieve as well as their fellow students. They are particularly successful in the intermediate GNVQ courses in business, and health and social care.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	87.9 (96.2)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	32.6 (33.5)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	281.5 (236.7)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 135 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

**Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout the school, and provide a firm foundation for their success in learning. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. Attendance is above average.

**Main strengths**

- Students work hard, behave very well and have very positive attitudes to the many opportunities the school offers
- The school ethos is excellent, and students feel included and part of a caring community
- Relationships between students and between staff and students are excellent
- Students mature into responsible and thoughtful young people

**Commentary**

12. Students' commitment to school life and their involvement in the rich and varied range of school activities make a very positive contribution to their personal development and to the high standards achieved. Students are clearly proud of their school and value all it has to offer. They behave very well in and around the school, which results in a calm environment within which students flourish and mature. High standards of behaviour and excellent relationships are a significant strength of the school. They make an important contribution to the excellent ethos and the quality of education it provides.
13. Almost all students are very keen to work hard and to achieve their best in lessons. Their positive attitudes towards learning were evident in a wide variety of lessons. Students discussed and questioned issues with considerable maturity. They were prepared to listen and learn from their teacher and from each other, and their attention and interest were caught and held by good and very good teaching. They worked effectively, both in groups and independently. Nearly all lessons were characterised by students' very good, and sometimes excellent, behaviour. Occasionally, a few younger students behaved in a silly and immature manner. Mostly, staff managed this well and did not allow it to get in the way of learning. Students' behaviour around the school is also very good, especially considering the size of the total school population and constraints in some parts of the buildings. At break and lunchtimes,

students mix happily together and no one is left out. Students are well mannered, helpful and welcoming to visitors, and make the school a very pleasant environment.

14. The encouragement and challenge provided in lessons enable students with special educational needs to participate fully in the life of the school as well as in lessons. The teachers and special needs support team are particularly good at building up students' self-esteem and confidence. This was a particularly strong feature in the mathematics, history, ICT and citizenship lessons observed during the inspection.
15. Students with English as an additional language behave as well as their peers. Their attitude to learning is very good. They are keen to succeed and enjoy their schooling.
16. Students have a high awareness of the importance of treating others with respect. This is strongly promoted in assemblies and in lessons, notably personal and social education. Consequently, bullying is not perceived to be a problem. Students interviewed during the inspection reported that immediate and effective action is taken as soon as the school is aware of the occasional bullying incident. The level of fixed-term exclusions was high last year. The school applies a policy of not tolerating any form of violence or abusive language towards staff or students. Short periods of exclusion have been used successfully to deal with inappropriate behaviour such as fighting at break times. Almost all the students are excluded only once, indicating the success of the school's zero-tolerance policy.

**Ethnic background of students**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1471	136	0
White – Irish	62	5	0
White – any other White background	99	13	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	18	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	21	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	43	3	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	80	9	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	11	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	2	0
Black or Black British – African	128	3	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	18	1	0
Chinese	10	0	0
Any other ethnic group	21	13	1
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

17. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. It is summarised in the motto 'Caritas', which underpins school policies and practices. Students have acquired very good spiritual awareness through the full and well developed religious life of the school. The chaplaincy makes a valuable contribution to this. Students of all ages, both Catholic and non-Catholic, participate in spiritual retreats, both in school and in external establishments. They regularly take part in liturgical events and outreach programmes. The

school provides a high quality act of worship which is interesting and relevant to students' lives, and based on a well chosen theme. This theme is further developed through a daily tutor period, though in many cases this time is used more for administrative matters. Work within some subjects, especially art, history and geography, provide students with valuable opportunities for reflective thought. For example, in music, students are encouraged to reflect on the mood that is created by particular pieces of music.

18. The moral and social development of students is excellent. The powerful ethos promotes high standards and an environment in which all members of the school community are valued. Students learn to be tolerant and respectful of others. They accept responsibility and have a clear moral code based on fundamental Christian values of love, equality, peace and justice. This is reflected in the very good relationships within the school, including harmonious relationships between students from different ethnic and social backgrounds. Both teaching and non-teaching staff provide very good role models. Students recognise that staff have high expectations in manners and behaviour, and they correspondingly respond in a positive and respectful way. A number of subjects provide opportunities to address various moral issues in lessons, for example in design technology where students are encouraged to reflect on the moral and social implications of their designs, and in geography where problems of the developing world and the environment are examined.
19. Students develop accomplished social skills during their time in the school. They are keen to accept community responsibilities. For example, many Year 10 students act as 'buddies' to Year 7 students, while others enjoy their duties as school council representatives, bus monitors and student receptionists. They participate in extra-curricular activities and visits with enthusiasm and in large numbers, showing co-operation and a willingness to take on new challenges.
20. The school provides a very good range of activities to promote cultural development. A particularly strong contribution is made by the art, design and technology and music departments, where multi-cultural education is addressed. Language exchanges, theatre and gallery visits are part of the regular diet of cultural activities on offer. Each summer term the school holds an 'Activities Week' which gives students the chance to try out different cultural pursuits. The school provides an increasing number of opportunities for students to widen their horizons by arranging numerous trips abroad to places such as Russia and Morocco. In the current school year, over 250 students from three year groups have signed up to take part in the annual ski trip to Europe.
21. The most recent attendance figures for the school show a further improvement from the attendance levels of the last inspection. Attendance is around 93%, which is above the national average. Unauthorised absence is consistently lower than the national average. The school has effective systems to monitor and promote good attendance, and makes parents aware of the importance of ensuring their children attend regularly. Parents support the school's efforts well, especially in view of the distances involved from many homes, and so punctuality to school is usually good. However, lessons do not always start promptly during the day because some students arrive late from the previous session, and this wastes valuable teaching time.

***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.6	School data	0.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

**Sixth form**



22. By the time they reach the sixth form, students have matured into responsible and thoughtful young people, and are very good role models for younger students. They have very positive attitudes to their work. This was reflected in their responses to the student questionnaire, as virtually all said they enjoy being in the sixth form. Attendance is above average. A very good rapport between teachers and students has been established, and students speak very highly of the quality of teaching and the support they receive both on academic and pastoral matters. They are highly motivated and work hard in lessons and outside school hours, and feel they have a strong voice in school matters. They are interested in life at the school and are prepared to play their part in it. For example, they organise fundraising activities, mentor younger students and help in classes. A number of students helped produce the school advent production and took a key role in organising last year's Mission. The sixth form council is active in raising money for charities and in arranging social activities.
23. The attitudes of students with special educational needs are very positive, particularly those who are taking courses in business or health and social care. Their behaviour, like that of their peers, is very mature and sensible.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall, as is the curriculum. Assessment is good. The provision for students' care, guidance and support is very good, as are links with parents and with other educational institutions. The school is very well led and managed.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are very good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, and good in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is good.

### Main strengths

- Teachers have very good subject expertise, and high expectations for their students
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good support to students with special educational needs
- Students work hard in response to their teachers' high expectations of their performance
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of examination requirements, and ensure that students are well prepared for them
- Thorough and informative marking helps students to do well, especially in art and design, the humanities and vocational subjects

### Commentary

24. The quality of teaching and learning was very good or excellent in an unusually high proportion of the lessons observed during the inspection. The proportion of good and better teaching was also higher than in most schools.

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 215 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
13 (6%)	68 (32%)	85 (40%)	44 (20%)	5 (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.*

25. The many strengths that characterise teaching and learning across Years 7 to 11 include:
- teachers' very good subject knowledge, which means that they are able to teach the subject content and associated skills confidently and respond to students' questions and difficulties very well;
  - planning for students' learning during lessons, including ensuring that the work is suitably adapted to individual needs when necessary;
  - teachers' high expectations of students' involvement and effort, as a result of which students are keen to do well and work hard during lessons;
  - lesson time being very well used, often with short activities interspersed with opportunities for students to reflect on how they are getting on;
  - teachers' use of a variety of resources, to present the topic in a varied and stimulating way that engages students' interest and meets the range of needs in the class;
  - the support provided to students with special educational needs, enabling them to take a full part in learning activities;
  - regular encouragement of students to think and learn independently, including in homework tasks.
26. Students respond by working hard and with interest, and often make rapid gains in their knowledge and skills. By Years 10 and 11, students are very good at independent work, and willingly combine in different groups for collaborative activities. They listen attentively to whole-class discussion and to teachers' questions and explanations, and enjoy learning. These students' learning is very good because of their motivation and effort in response to the skilful teaching.

27. In Years 7 to 9, an occasional weakness was that the work did not meet the needs of the students in the class. Students became restless when the pace of the lesson was too slow, and in a few lessons the teacher had to work hard to ensure that everyone in the class behaved properly. This happened most frequently in Year 8, although the same classes sometimes worked very hard and well in other subjects.
28. Students who speak English as an additional language are well included in activities. They contribute well orally and are given very good support by other students, teachers and learning support assistants. They are often targeted by teachers, who are well aware of their language limitations, to ensure they understand. However, at times teachers do too little to encourage the students to join fully in classroom discussion as they leave the responsibility for meeting these students' needs primarily to the support person. The result is that the students are occasionally marginalised in lessons, despite the fact that they are keen to impress by giving correct answers.
29. The teaching of students with special educational needs is very good overall. It is particularly good for students following the ASDAN programme. In general, teachers are very aware of the needs of individuals. Skilful adaptation of materials, including for those with visual difficulties, ensures that the students achieve very well. They are given skilled classroom support that is well planned to meet their identified needs, which are very well documented in individual education plans. This was observed in lessons in English, mathematics, physical education, art, citizenship, history, geography, leisure and tourism and ICT. However, occasionally tasks do not match the needs of these students well enough. This affects students' learning, particularly when special needs teachers and assistants are not providing extra support in the classroom.
30. The good relationships between students and teachers, who know them well, enable open and frank discussions to take place in citizenship and PSHE lessons. Those who have special educational needs take a full part in these sessions. Students who speak English as an additional language are also well included in activities. They contribute well orally and are given very good support by other students. Teachers, who are well aware of their language limitations, often pay particular attention to ensuring that they understand.
31. A further strength is that teachers have very good knowledge of examination requirements, particularly at GCSE. They prepare students systematically in how to do well in their coursework and final examinations, using assessment information productively to help them improve. Teachers' assessment of the quality of students' work is good. They often give very clear oral feedback to let students know how they are doing in lessons, particularly in art and design, history and geography. This gives students an extremely clear understanding of what to do next to improve their work. Marking of written work is generally thorough and helpful. It is very good in some subjects, including history and geography, because detailed, constructive comments are provided and the students learn from the advice given. The school uses a system of 'traffic lights' and arrows to show students how well they are doing in relation to their previous attainment. The system is very well understood by students, and is particularly beneficial to those with special educational needs who have reading difficulties.

### **Sixth Form**

32. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good, for the same reasons as in Years 7 to 11. Teachers provide excellent encouragement and support to students in response to individual needs, and this helps everyone to take a full part in lessons. For example, Year 12 students are given very good help to adapt to sixth form studies, as teachers are well aware of the challenge of A-level courses in comparison with GCSE. Students with special educational needs also learn very well, particularly in the AVCE courses. For instance, excellent support in a business course enabled a small number of students with special needs to work effectively alongside their fellow students and to achieve extremely well. This was because the teacher constantly fed back information to them, offered new ideas and challenged them to think for

themselves in planning a role-play on consumer protection. The subsequent role plays were of a high quality, and the standard attained was well above expectation for these students. Similar strengths in teaching and learning were seen in other vocational lessons.

33. Assessment is good in the sixth form, as for younger students. Work is marked very thoroughly, so that students are aware of how to improve its quality. This is particularly effective in art and design, geography, history and the vocational programmes, where students have excellent opportunities to self-assess and set personal targets. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to ensure that students know the assessment requirements of examinations very well. Personal targets are very well used in directing students towards their goals. In the most successful lessons, teachers made regular reference to the targets for students' learning.

### **The curriculum**

The school provides a very good curriculum, which meets students' needs throughout their time at the school. The range of extra-curricular and other enrichment activities is excellent. Staffing and resources for learning are very good, and the accommodation is good.

### **Main strengths**

- The school provides a broad curriculum which is fully appropriate to students' needs
- Equality of access to the curriculum and the opportunities for all students are very good
- Students with special educational needs are provided for very well
- In Years 7 to 9, the school's introduction of the National Strategy is helping to raise standards significantly
- A very wide range of extra-curricular activities enriches the taught curriculum

### **Commentary**

34. The large size of the school enables it to offer a very good range of subjects for students in Years 7 to 11, staffed by specialist teachers. The curriculum is appropriate to students' needs. Considerable thought has gone into its development, and its appropriateness is monitored and evaluated rigorously. Action to extend the curriculum has been taken when the school has identified a need. For example, students in Years 10 and 11 who were not interested in the traditional subject-based curriculum can now take a Youth Award Scheme (ASDAN) course and follow work-based day-release schemes. The range of GCSE options is excellent.
35. The school has also responded very positively to national initiatives aimed at improving teaching and learning. In particular, its introduction of the National Strategy in Years 7 to 9 is having a profoundly positive effect on standards, particularly in mathematics, history and geography. The approaches of the National Strategy have also had a very beneficial impact on the curriculum for older students in several subjects.
36. Curricular links between subjects are generally very successful, and make a strong contribution to students' success. Of particular note is the positive impact the work of the art and design department is having on approaches to teaching, learning and the promotion of creativity in the design and technology department. Students' language and literacy skills are promoted very systematically and well across the curriculum, and particularly strongly in history and geography. The opportunities to develop cross-curricular numeracy skills are satisfactory.
37. Provision for students' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. Students entering the school in Year 7 have a very good induction programme. Students in Years 7 to 9 commented very favourably on the support that they had received from older students when they started. PSHE sessions, taken from the normal curriculum time from Year 8 onwards, are taught very well. Exploring issues such as bullying, smoking, drugs and crime helps students better understand many everyday life situations that are very relevant to them. The quality of provision is strengthened by the use of high-profile members of staff to teach the sessions. Inter-linking of PSHE and citizenship allows students to look at a wide range of issues such as human rights and responsibilities. They

develop good skills of enquiry and communication. The PSHE and citizenship lessons make a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and are particularly good in giving students spiritual and reflective experiences.

38. Curricular provision for students with special educational needs is very good. They enjoy equality of opportunity and access to all subjects. A very effective programme develops their reading, writing, planning and study skills, to help them do well in their public examination courses. The ASDAN qualification and work-related courses in Years 10 and 11 are well suited to the needs of many students with special educational needs, adding a new dimension to the curriculum since the last inspection. The inclusion unit plans its support very well, so that the individuals who work there do not fall behind in the curriculum followed by the rest of their class.
39. The provision for enriching students' learning through extra-curricular activities is outstanding. It contributes to the learning ethos of the school, and to students achieving very well academically and in their personal development. The rich and varied programme provides opportunities for students of all ages. The range of educational visits includes trips to the local theatre and art gallery, exchange trips to France, Germany and Spain, geography fieldtrips in England and history visits to the battlefields of France. Booster classes prepare students for the Year 9 national tests, and revision sessions after school prepare students for the GCSE examinations. At breaks and after school, the school offers a wide variety of clubs and activities, which include a Masterclass for Year 10 students, an art club for Year 7 and sessions for gifted and talented students. A comprehensive range of sporting activities includes dance, boys' and girls' football, rugby, hockey and basketball, as parents commented before the inspection. Students' high rates of participation in these enrichment activities and positive comments from parents show that these activities are greatly valued.
40. The match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the demands of the curriculum is very good. Departments are fully staffed, with teachers who are subject specialists. Expertise in art and design is outstanding. Teaching assistants are generally well trained and have very good expertise in providing support to students with special educational needs. The quality of administrative and support staff is also outstanding, which contributes much to the very efficient management of the school.
41. The school has good accommodation, which has been improved since the last inspection by an on-going programme of building, refurbishment and re-organisation. A new library and resources building is currently under construction. Specialist accommodation for art is very good and work displayed is of a very high standard. Specialist facilities for science are good. Displays around the school are very good in some areas. Although the accommodation for design and technology is sizeable, it needs refurbishing. The school has a very clear asset management plan aimed at further improvements, including for design and technology, in order to enhance the curriculum and raise standards further.
42. Resources for learning are very good. Most departments have plentiful textbooks and specialist equipment. Although design and technology has sufficient equipment, it is rather old and in need of upgrading. The ICT suite is very well equipped, though a lack of computers in subject departments limits the curriculum in certain subjects, including design and technology.

### **Sixth Form**

43. The sixth form curriculum is excellent. It offers a very broad range of academic subjects and a suitable range of vocational courses. The provision is evaluated thoroughly, and new subjects are offered as needs are identified. For example, law has recently been introduced and is proving popular. This course is innovative because it is taught partly by web-based distance learning.

44. The school's academic curriculum complements the rich variety of vocational training opportunities on offer at other colleges locally, and staff make sure that Year 11 students make an informed choice of their sixth form studies. Particular care is taken to make sure that the timetable allows every student to take the combination of subjects he or she would like. In 2004, the school accommodated all the subject combinations requested, much to the appreciation of the students.
45. Students with special educational needs have very good access to sixth form courses. The introduction of vocational courses in business studies and health and social care has considerably improved the opportunities for these students to stay at school. Most take vocational courses, although a few are taking AS level courses in Year 12.
46. The school has built up good links with local business and industry with the support of the local education business partnership. Careers advice and guidance is good, and includes a 'Moving On' day in Year 12, involving a number of local business people who help students learn how to apply for jobs. All GNVQ students go on short work placements and many students make good use of part-time jobs for coursework in vocational subjects. Some ICT students design brochures for local clients. Most AS, A2 and AVCE students do not yet have enough opportunities for regular work shadowing or short placements, but staff are planning to extend the good links already made in some subjects such as business and health and social care.
47. A very rich choice of extra-curricular activities is available in the arts, sports and foreign travel. The take-up of these opportunities is very good. Students also have very good opportunities to help younger students with their studies and to work in the local community.
48. Accommodation and resources in the sixth form are very good and promote independent learning and study. However, private study areas for the sixth form are restricted. Currently, students use the library, which limits library use for the main school. The school plans that this will be overcome when the new library building is completed, in spring 2005.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school is a community with a common purpose that makes very good provision for students' care, welfare and health and safety. Its support, advice and guidance are very good, as is the way in which it seeks to involve students in its work and development.

### **Main strengths**

- Students' individual needs for care and support are checked and provided for very well
- The school makes very good arrangements for students' academic guidance, particularly when they make their choice of GCSE and sixth form subjects
- The needs of students with personal or academic difficulties are met very well through the work of the inclusion unit and special educational needs staff

### **Commentary**

49. The school's very good provision for students' wellbeing and care is based on a strong system of support for their individual needs. Students are confident that there is someone to whom they can turn if in difficulty. The head of year and form tutor have pivotal roles for most students, and a full-time chaplain and counsellor provide additional support. The school has its own medical team which is available at all times to give first-aid, deal with minor injuries and give advice about medical issues.
50. The school has appropriate policies and procedures for child protection and for health and safety.
51. Heads of year monitor carefully how well students are doing. They make sure that where there is a cause for concern, students are given specific targets to raise achievement, standards of behaviour

or attendance. Careful monitoring of attendance alerts the school to potential issues. The school's administration team give very good support to the heads of year in checking on attendance.

52. Very good arrangements ensure that students' transition from primary school is smooth, and parents and students are appreciative of this. The headteacher visits all the primary schools, to talk with Year 6 pupils and their parents. Year 6 pupils are introduced to older students who will act as 'buddies' and help them settle into the school. The buddies undergo a training programme arranged through the school's personal and social education team. On the induction days in July and September, students are introduced to the form tutor who is to be the main adult with responsibility for offering support, advice and guidance. Year 7 students' progress is evaluated at the end of September, to identify who needs additional support. This early intervention helps students to settle into the school quickly and well.
53. The school also has very good arrangements for Year 9 students' transition to Year 10. A careers programme helps students select their GCSE subjects, and the headteacher meets all Year 9 students in groups to talk about the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Teachers responsible for subjects which students have not studied before explain the course requirements to them. Every effort is made to enable each student to follow his or her preferences, and so all students are able to take their first choice of subjects. Students also receive very good advice during Year 11 to guide them in their choices post 16. For example, there are 'taster days' of life in the sixth form, and careers interviews are arranged when necessary or requested. Information on sixth form courses at other establishments is readily available.
54. All students have a period of work experience in Year 10 to prepare them for the world of work. Year 11 students have very good careers guidance, through lessons at the beginning of the year, and at individual careers guidance meetings. The school has invested in its careers provision and now has a purpose-built careers library and interview room.
55. The school is very good at involving students through seeking their views. For example, class, year and school councils provide highly effective forums where students' views are aired and taken seriously. Students report that the school listens to and acts upon their suggestions, which have included the provision of picnic benches and bottles of water. The school also consults students on matters such as the behaviour management and assessment procedures. The respect accorded to their views contributes to the school's ethos as a community in which everyone has a valuable part to play.
56. The school caters very well for individual students experiencing specific problems. Students with special educational needs are very well known by the staff, whose high expectations bring about a very positive response from the majority of these students. They know that they are very safe and secure in the school environment. This is particularly evident in the work of the inclusion unit, which is very well run. It provides individual support to many students, and sensitive counselling is a strong feature of its work. Students' individual education plans are very well designed.
57. Many of the students with English as an additional language are of Sudanese origin. They are given very good support, and are very happy to approach specialist staff with any problems with which they need help. The result is that the students feel safe and cared for in the school. They also feel challenged and fulfilled.
58. The school has very good systems for tracking and guiding the academic and personal progress of individual students. The arrangements begin before students enter the school, with data gathered from the very good primary liaison visits. The information is often put to very good use, for example to identify where additional support is needed in order to enable students to achieve their potential. This contributed to rise in Year 9 test results in 2004. Many subject leaders make very good use of the information they receive to group students and track individuals' progress. However, the school

makes too little use of assessment information to check for patterns of underachievement among different groups of students.

### **Sixth form**

59. The very good arrangements described above are carried into the sixth form. For example, students from the sixth form are part of the chaplaincy team. They make a strong contribution to the wellbeing of younger students through support work with them, and leading discussion groups on a range of issues. Students with special educational needs continue to be helped very well by their teachers. Their specific needs are very well known to staff. Teaching assistants provide support where it is needed, to very good effect. Students receive very good guidance on the next steps in their education as they go through the sixth form, and visits to universities are undertaken.
60. The school monitors its students thoroughly throughout their time in the sixth form. Very good use is made of subject data to assess the students' attainment against national data, and to assess how well they have done at AS and A level in comparison with predictions based on their GCSE results. This data is also used very well to help plan developments to the sixth form provision, so that improvements can be made where necessary.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's links with parents are very good, and it is held in high regard by them. Links with the local community are good. Links with other schools and colleges are very good

### **Main strengths**

- Parents are very supportive of the school and value the education and care their children receive
- The quality of information about the school and students' education is very good and helps parents to support their children's learning well
- Very good links with the primary schools from which most students transfer ensure that students settle quickly and happily into Year 7



## **Commentary**

61. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to develop further its partnership with parents. Parental support for the school and for their children's education is strong. The school is popular with parents and has been over-subscribed. Most parents make a considerable effort to support their children's education by ensuring that they attend regularly, that homework is completed, and that the school's expectations for behaviour and high expectations are upheld. Attendance is high at parents' evenings, and information sessions on aspects of the curriculum are well supported. A number of parents serve as governors, and are very knowledgeable about the school. They are often used as 'sounding boards' for issues which arise. Last year the school held a Mission which generated considerable support and involvement from students and their families.
62. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that the vast majority of parents feel their children are happy at school, the teaching is good and their children are expected to work hard and make good progress. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school and are encouraged to contact the school with any issues or suggestions. Good links have been established between the pastoral team, including tutors and heads of year, and parents. The findings of the inspection support parents' positive views of the school.
63. Written information for parents – including the prospectus, governors' annual report, GCSE and sixth form course information – is of a very high standard, detailed and well presented. Weekly newsletters celebrate students' achievements and keep parents informed of current developments. Written reports, sent out each term, are generally of good quality and contain useful and specific targets to help students to improve. Homework diaries are used well to keep parents informed of work to be done, and to act as a useful conduit of information between home and school. The school contacts parents as soon as problems arise and keeps them well involved in any action to be taken. Through a system of 'good' or 'bad' letters, they are promptly informed of any concerns or achievements.
64. Links with ethnic minority communities are very good. School staff keep very close links with parents of students who speak English as an additional language. The school's weekly newsletter is translated into Arabic, which is the most frequently-spoken other language, as are other relevant communications.
65. Links with the local business community are good, providing students with a range of opportunities for work experience. People from the local community support the school's 'Focus Days' and the police liaison officer delivers aspects of the personal and social education programme such as personal safety and drugs awareness.
66. The care and support for students are enhanced by the good links with a range of local agencies and support services. For example, the physical education department has strong links with the local rugby club, and sports clubs in the local area regularly use the school's grounds. The school meets its statutory requirements very well in respect of its special needs students, developing strong links with their parents and the agencies that support them. This contributes to these students' success.
67. Contacts with primary schools are well established and productive, and the school has developed an excellent, thoughtful and supportive programme to integrate students into Year 7. Staff members visit the primary schools, along with a number of senior students, to introduce themselves to Year 6 pupils. Prospective students have a number of well-planned opportunities to sample aspects of life at Cardinal Newman before they start in Year 7. Students and their parents are fulsome in their praise for the induction arrangements. The school liaises with local secondary schools to share good practice in curriculum areas, and students compete against numerous local schools in sporting fixtures.

## **Sixth form**

68. As for students in Years 7 to 11, community links are used well to promote learning and personal development. Links with employers support the Young Enterprise scheme and the learning of those on the business studies course. Students undertake voluntary work in local primary schools, the local hospital and hospice. Links with the local universities include visits and attendance at Masterclasses.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Governance is very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Leadership of key staff is very good. Management is very effective. The sixth form is also very well led and managed.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader who has an ambitious vision for the future of the school and is supported by a very good senior leadership team
- Financial resources are exceptionally well managed
- There is a secure understanding of the strengths and weakness of the school
- Governors support the school very well through their role as critical friend

#### **Commentary**

69. The headteacher is an outstanding and inspirational leader. His vision for the school is founded on Christian principles born out in the trusting relationships that underpin the day-to-day work of the school. He is strongly committed to the school as a learning community in which continuing professional and personal development are key responsibilities of adults and students alike. For example, all members of the senior team have completed, or are in the process of completing, advanced professional qualifications and have close links with other local schools. The headteacher is ambitious for his staff and very committed to raising standards. Achieving specialist school status in the humanities is central to his long-term vision. With the shared commitment and excellent teamwork of all involved in the school, standards have risen and plans for specialist status are advancing very well.
70. Very effective management systems and efficient administrative staff provide the essential day-to-day support services that enable teachers to concentrate on their curriculum responsibilities. This contributes to the school providing a calm and purposeful learning environment.
71. Priorities for improvement are well co-ordinated. The senior leadership group fulfils its delegated responsibilities very well. Senior staff lead by example and are very effective teachers and role models. They share a secure understanding of what is working well and where improvements are needed. This is exemplified by the school's own self-evaluation of its performance, which inspectors found to be accurate in almost all areas. Opportunities to debate and discuss the impact of resources on the school's key priorities for improvement are effectively explored through leadership meetings and the committees of the governing body. These offer constructive lines of communication and a chance for governors to ask the probing questions that make them valued and effective critical friends.
72. The governing body is a very effective and skilled group, fully aware of the main strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors participate in shaping the direction of the school by providing a sharp but supportive challenge to the senior leadership team. They are dosely involved with the senior leadership team in strategic planning and in monitoring the implementation of the school improvement plan. Governors have contributed to the introduction of a more formal approach to planning, without damaging the trust and strong pastoral ethos which are major strengths of the school. Governors feel welcome in the school and take a keen interest in its management. They are well informed on child protection and special needs issues. They monitor the budget and ensure that money is wisely spent, reporting back to parents annually. Since the last inspection they have increased their involvement with the school, with more frequent meetings and visits, and through the setting up of up committees to deal with all major aspects of the school's development. They have addressed all the issues of

the previous inspection, and their annual report to parents and the school prospectus now fully meet statutory requirements.

73. The school is strongly committed to providing equally well for all its students, responding to their individual needs. It is successfully providing for the majority of students through well-planned lessons that meet their learning needs very well. Those who need individual help are identified quickly. The provision for students who speak English as an additional language is very well led. It is managed efficiently, with the result that support is good. The leadership and management of special educational needs work are also very good.

### **Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	6,590,709
Total expenditure	6,082,886
Expenditure per student	3,010

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	300,091
Balance carried forward to the next year	507,823

74. The financial resources are expertly managed in order to meet the school's long and short-term priorities. The monitoring of spending decisions and being able to account for their impact, in terms of students' achievements, are pursued very seriously. The school is fortunate in having the expertise of governors and staff whose financial management skills in both education and the business environment have been instrumental in raising funds for new accommodation and significant improvements to the older part of the building.

#### **Sixth Form**

75. The sixth form shares all the key features of the strong leadership and management of the rest of the school. The headteacher and senior staff are strongly committed to ensuring that students are developing their skills as independent learners and their leadership qualities. For example, the school involved sixth form students in an innovative approach to raising standards in Year 9. A team of students was recruited and trained to work alongside a group of students identified through school monitoring systems as requiring additional teaching and support to achieve their target National Curriculum levels. This proved to be a popular and valuable learning experience for everyone concerned. To this end, the school has ambitious plans to extend the opportunities for involving students in the day-to-day life of the school.
76. Self-evaluation is very good. Subject leaders rigorously analyse the information they are given on students' prior attainment, alongside their own assessments of students' progress and predicted examination grades. These middle managers are largely very effective. In art and design, history and geography, leadership and management are excellent. In mathematics, while teachers in the department work very well together, leadership is not sufficiently purposeful and forward looking. The leadership and management of the work relating to the students with special educational needs are very good, with careful monitoring of how well the students are doing.
77. The management of resources is excellent. The sixth form is cost effective and operates within the budget it generates. As in the main school, spending is closely monitored with a keen eye on ensuring value for money.

#### **WORK-RELATED LEARNING**

Provision for work-related education is good.

##### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All Year 10 students go on well-planned and supervised work placements of a week
- The school has developed some very good links with local businesses
- Youth Award (ASDAN) lessons are managed very well, and students are set realistic targets to improve their work
- Few teachers plan for work-related elements within their lessons

##### **Commentary**

78. The quality of work-related education is good overall and students achieve well in vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11. All students learn about how companies and other organisations run, through well-organised work placements of a week and good lessons on careers. These include a careers day, run with local business people, and newly-introduced work-related PSHE lessons in Year 10. The contribution of work-related elements to students' achievement in most curriculum subjects is currently insufficient, but it is very good in leisure and tourism,

ASDAN and child care. ICT now makes a significant contribution to work-related learning in Years 10 and 11 through the recently-introduced GNVQ course.

79. Students who find learning difficult are very well taught in Years 10 and 11 ASDAN lessons, provided for about 30 students in all. Students on vocational courses learn well from good and often very good teaching, and so achieve well. Standards in the small sample of lessons seen were in line with national expectations for students' age and ability. Students, including those with special educational needs, develop good attitudes to their work and behave well. In lessons, they develop good team work and problem-solving skills, and their work shows effective use of ICT to present short reports. Teachers mark students' work promptly and in great detail, often giving them relevant action points to help them improve. Regular visits to local hotels, leisure centres and nurseries are made by students taking courses in leisure and tourism and child care.
80. The senior leadership team provides a good strategic overview of work-related education and is implementing the new statutory requirements very well. Most vocational lessons are taught by experienced staff with good experience of industry, and they manage local business links very well. All students have an individual interview about their choice of work placement. This is an excellent feature, and together with the PSHE careers lessons in Year 10, and GNVQ lessons in ICT and leisure and tourism, typifies the considerable improvement in work-related education since the last inspection.

## 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.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have positive attitudes to their work, and relationships are very good
- Good teaching and students' good behaviour create a respectful learning environment within which students achieve well
- Leadership and management are effective, with good team commitment and collaboration
- Assessment and marking in Years 7 to 9 are inconsistent in quality, frequency and usefulness
- Tasks set sometimes do not meet the needs of students of all levels of attainment within the class

##### Commentary

81. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were above average. They went up in line with the national trend between 1999 and 2003. The results were above average compared to schools in which students had gained similar results in their Year 6 tests three years earlier, indicating that the students achieved well. In 2004, both boys' and girls' results were much higher than in previous years. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average in English language. The results were above average in English literature, with a very high entry of almost the entire year group. Girls in Years 9 and 11 did better than boys, but with a narrower gap than nationally. The highest-attaining girls did particularly well in gaining A\* and A grades at GCSE. Results in English literature in 2004 were slightly lower than the year before, whereas the English results were a little higher.
82. By Year 9, students are confident in speaking and listening. Consequently, they share and pursue ideas well in class and group discussion. They read a wide range of high quality fiction, poetry and plays in class, especially when teachers introduce demanding texts in Year 9. Since the last inspection, independent reading has increased and activities are well supported by the library. Students' writing remains a weaker area and is often very brief. Students do not practise drafting and redrafting regularly enough to produce well-crafted finished work of which they are proud. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language achieve well as they are given helpful extra support.
83. Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in their oral, reading and writing skills. Higher-attaining students in Year 11 are articulate and able to sustain their points of view very well in class discussion. They also have good skills in presenting ideas more formally. Good questioning by teachers helps students to think more deeply about their reading. Students' writing is increasingly well planned and developed. Their literature essays and extended

creative and personal writing frequently reach a high standard. Work is well presented, whether handwritten or word processed, and technically accurate in final drafts.

84. Teaching and learning are good overall, and often very good in Years 10 and 11. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students generally behave well, show respect to others and have positive attitudes to their work. They want to succeed and they respond well to work that is demanding and challenging. Teachers move the lessons forward at a lively pace with a range of working styles that offer a productive balance between individual, group, pair and whole class activities. The students' commitment to doing well and good teaching means that occasional student misdemeanours do not disrupt the concentration and learning of others in the class.
85. Although teachers make activities clear in lessons, they do not always explain fully the skills they want students to learn and adjust the tasks to students' different abilities. Sometimes, teachers do not allow enough time for an imaginative review at the end of the lesson, to consider how, as well as what, students have learned. Teachers keep good records of students' progress in tests and class work, but they do not yet involve the students enough in reflecting on the quality of their work and how to improve in future. Teachers' marking is of varying quality, with the best providing students with good guidance on how they could improve.
86. Leadership and management of the department are good, and support the ethos and direction of the school. Since the last inspection, the department has maintained its strengths. Documentation is of a very good standard and records are carefully kept. A new initiative involving team teaching with ICT staff is proving a success in Year 8. The department's implementation of the National Strategy contributed to the marked rise in results in Year 9 tests in 2004. Staff work as a team with a collective determination to offer the students the very best. Monitoring of teaching is helpful though has not yet tackled rigorously issues which the department itself has identified for action, including planning work to match students' different abilities and inconsistency in marking.

#### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

87. Standards of literacy are very good across the school. Subjects other than English make a good contribution to developing and maintaining these standards. For example, in design and technology students develop very good research skills and in science they learn how to extract information from texts. In art, students are taught how to structure their writing when evaluating their work and accuracy is given particular importance in modern foreign languages. History and geography make a particularly strong contribution as many opportunities are planned in lessons for discussion, debate, wide reading and writing. This focus on developing students' skills in language and literacy contributes to students doing very well in humanities subjects. The oral skills of students are of particular note in all lessons. Students speak confidently, listen attentively and express their feelings and ideas in an articulate manner.

#### **Arabic**

Provision in Arabic is very good.

	<b>Years 7, 8 and 9</b>	<b>Years 10 and 11</b>
Standards	Not applicable	Well above average
Achievement	Not applicable	Very good
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Outstanding
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**



- Teaching and learning are very good, and so students achieve very well
- GCSE examination results have been consistently well above the national average with almost every student entered for Arabic gaining a higher grade (A\* to C)
- Assessment is effective in helping students improve their performance
- Students have insufficient opportunities to use spoken Arabic in lessons

## Examination results

88. In 2003, the GCSE examination results were well above the national average. Almost every student entered for GCSE Arabic since 2000 has attained a grade A\* to C, with the overwhelming majority attaining the higher grades. In 2004, these high figures were maintained. Students generally did much better in Arabic than in their other subjects, due in large part to the very challenging and successful teaching.
89. The students make very good progress during the course. When students start studying Arabic in Year 10, they have to start from scratch. Although they speak colloquial Arabic fairly fluently, their knowledge of Classical Arabic is virtually non-existent. Within a very short period, students write simple phrases using newly-learned vocabulary. By the end of Year 10, their skills in written work are sufficient to allow them to write short pieces independently. By the end of Year 11, students do very well at GCSE as they are able to write fairly long passages, read fluently and extract meaning from advanced pieces.
90. Teaching is very good. The result is that students are interested and keen to succeed, and do very well. Lessons are thoroughly prepared with clear objectives. Students are given opportunities to work with attractive resources which are aimed at coaching them in examination techniques. This means that students know exactly what is required of them to attain the highest grades possible. They are assessed regularly, and given explicit guidance on what to do next to improve their work. Added to these positive qualities, a genuine passion for learning Arabic is imparted to the students. Students are initially hesitant in using Classical Arabic and have too few opportunities in the classroom to speak Arabic or to read passages, in order to consolidate their use of the language.
91. Very good subject leadership is illustrated by the outstanding resources which have been produced to enable the students to learn Arabic as well as to coach them in examination techniques and independent learning. The Arabic teaching area has been made colourful and attractive with displays of students' work and of useful language prompts. The result is that students take real pride in their Arabic studies. Management is excellent, with excellent resources, a well-organised classroom, high expectations of behaviour and attitudes, and a business-like working environment. Personal support to students is very good.
92. The last report mentioned Arabic only in passing. All judgements were positive. Since then the improvement has been significant, leading to the students being very successful at GCSE as well as to a higher and more respected profile for Arabic within the school.

## French

Provision in French is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' positive attitudes and good behaviour make an important contribution to their learning
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the language
- Teachers make insufficient use of marking and other assessment information, to help students improve their work

## Commentary

93. In 2003, the results of the teacher assessment for modern foreign languages overall were above the national average. GCSE French results were average in 2003. Boys did well as the proportion who gained grades A\* to C was above the average for boys nationally, whereas girls did less well than girls nationally. The 2004 results were higher than those for 2003. Overall, the standard of work in Years 9 and 11 is in line with the expectations for this stage in the course. Students tend to lack the confidence to take initiatives or to ask questions in French. Higher-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 have a good understanding of French. For example, they answer questions using the present, past and future tenses although some are very dependent on prompts. Higher-attainers write well, but in general students do too little extended writing.
94. Teachers know their subject well, focusing on what they expect students to learn. New work is practised in depth, to give students confidence to use new skills and vocabulary. Where the teaching was good, the variety of tasks and the pace invited all students to participate and so they made good progress. Teachers used National Curriculum levels and the criteria for GCSE grade to raise students' expectations of their achievement, and they reviewed and evaluated the students' learning during or at the end of the lesson. The emphasis on developing students' literacy skills and understanding of grammar is good. Marking of some students' work is regular and gives students a clear idea of how to improve their written work, but this is not consistent. This contributes to inaccuracies persisting in students' written work. Students generally work hard. Very good relationships foster students' positive attitudes and encourage them to learn well. Occasionally, weaknesses in teaching were caused by insufficient use of assessment information to plan appropriate activities, and students lost interest and concentration.

### German

Provision in German is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

### Main strengths

- Students are very well prepared for their examinations, and so do very well
- Teachers have high expectations for all students, and use German to very good effect in lessons
- Students enjoy their lessons

### Commentary

95. Standards in German are well above the expectation for this stage of the Year 9 course because of the very high quality teaching the students receive. Year 9 students have a wide working vocabulary and handle a variety of tenses with confidence. This represents very good achievement. In 2003, students did very well at GCSE. The proportions of boys and of girls who gained grades A\* to C was especially high. Overall, both boys and girls did considerably better in German than in their other subjects. Standards are also well above expectations for this stage of Year 11. Students are confident and competent in speaking, listening, reading and writing. They have a wide vocabulary at their disposal and use complex sentence structure to express their ideas and opinions.
96. Teaching and learning are both very good. The high-quality teaching is the major contributory factor to students doing so well. Teaching is characterised by very skilful use of German in lessons, very good pace and variety of activity, and a strong focus on what students ought to do

to improve their language skills. Lessons are very well planned, and students thoroughly enjoy the work. Their participation and concentration are very good and, as a result, the quality of their learning is very good. Teachers set high expectations. Students learn progressively how to develop their style in spoken and written German, and express their feelings and opinions with growing confidence. Only occasionally, where lesson planning is less rigorous, does students' learning fall below the very good quality which is the norm.

## Spanish

Provision in Spanish is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

### Main strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge
- Large numbers of students choose to continue with Spanish to GCSE
- Students are well prepared for the demands of external examinations

### Commentary

97. Students did not take GCSE Spanish in 2003. Those who took GCSE in 2004 were very successful, particularly in the proportion who gained grades A\* to C. The above-average teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 reflect accurately the standards observed during the inspection. Students' achievement is good. For example, by Year 9 most students have started to use a variety of tenses and have a fairly wide range of vocabulary at their disposal. Most Year 11 students have a sound knowledge of tenses and use them accurately.
98. In the most successful lessons, the teaching was well planned, with a good variety of activities to engage students' interest. The work was conducted at a good pace. Teachers used Spanish well to promote and develop the students' skills in listening comprehension but, on occasion, an over-reliance on English encouraged the students to translate rather than to use Spanish creatively and independently. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very focused on preparing the older students for GCSE success, which contributes to their good learning.

### Leadership and management of modern foreign languages

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

99. The leadership of modern foreign languages is good overall. In German it is excellent. The subject leaders provide good role models and promote good teamwork. They have a clear vision of what constitutes a successful languages department and of the nature of effective language teaching. This clarity of vision is contributing to standards rising. The management of modern foreign languages is also good overall. Schemes of work are useful working documents. Good use is made of the weekly departmental meeting to share ideas and pool resources. New teachers receive good support through a structured programme of induction. Assessment data is used well to evaluate the effectiveness of the department, but teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently rigorously. Accommodation and resources are very good. Classroom displays are attractive, with key words clearly displayed to support teaching and learning. Students' participation levels are high in the very good programme of exchange visits to France and Germany, and good programme of educational visits to France, Germany and Spain.
100. The improvement in modern languages since the last inspection has been good, and especially so in German. A change in the overall management of languages, with a head of faculty co-ordinating the work in French, German and Spanish, is starting to bring greater consistency to teaching and learning in these languages.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

  

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths

- The introduction of the National Strategy for students in Years 7 to 9 has contributed to standards improving, and results rising in 2004
- Students in all year groups achieve well, as a result of good teaching and learning
- Students display very good attitudes and behaviour in the majority of lessons

### Commentary

101. The overall results of the 2003 national tests for students in Year 9 were average, in comparison with national results for all schools and for schools in which students had gained similar results in their Year 6 tests three years earlier. The proportion of students who gained level 5 or better was above average. Between 1999, the time of the last inspection, and 2003, the results went up in line with the national trend. Boys have tended to outperform girls, whereas nationally their results are similar. The results for 2004 show a significant improvement on those for 2003, reflecting the good impact of the department's work to introduced the National Strategy for students in Years 7 to 9.
102. GCSE results were above the national average in 2003, overall and in the percentage of students who gained grades A\* to C. Results at grades A and B were above average, indicating that higher-attaining students did well. Girls did less well in mathematics than in their other subjects. The 2004 results were better than those for 2003, especially in the proportion of A\* grades.
103. The standards attained in Years 9 and 11 reflect the above-average results of 2004. For example, higher-attaining students in Year 9 have a good understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages, and know how to round numbers to two significant figures. The majority of Year 9 students display good knowledge when solving money problems involving percentage increases and decreases. In Year 11, higher-attaining students are working towards A\* and A grades, and middle set students are also attaining above-average standards. Students have very good knowledge of circle theorems and indices. They solve problems involving quadratic equations and algebraic fractions correctly. They have good knowledge of mathematical vocabulary and are confident when using it.
104. Students, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve well throughout the school. For example, most lower-attaining Year 8 students have already improved their attainment by a full National Curriculum level since the start of Year 7, which is better than the gains predicted on the basis of their attainment on entry to the school. Some students achieve up to two grades higher in GCSE examinations than was predicted from their attainment on entry. Higher-attaining Year 7 students showed that they have above-average knowledge of place value as they are confident in multiplying decimals by 10, 100 and 1,000. Year 8 students have above average skills in numeracy, and produce conversion graphs correctly. Higher-attaining students in Year 10 can solve equations

with fractional coefficients and check their answers by substitution. When given word problems, they are able to formulate suitable equations and solve them. Students of all ages are very motivated to succeed, and have very good relationships with their teachers. These strengths contribute much to their progress, especially when the teaching is good or better.

105. Teachers have very good subject expertise, and many other skills which contribute to the overall good quality of teaching and learning. The National Strategy is being used well to improve the quality of teaching, learning and students' achievement. In the most successful lessons, teachers plan well-structured lessons with clear objectives that enable students to learn new skills and gain new knowledge. Teachers give very clear explanations, and model methods very well to ensure that students are confident when working independently. A very good aspect of teaching is the use of questions that challenge students to explain their own strategies and methods to solve problems. This was particularly effective in a Year 8 class of lower-attaining students working on data handling, when they were asked to explain the key features of their graphs. The interactive nature of such lessons and the brisk pace keeps students interested and concentrating. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and this, along with very good management of classroom activities, means that students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Occasional weaknesses in teaching include a slow pace, lack of clear objectives and tasks that do not challenge students to think or to work at a suitable level. Reviews of the work done in the lesson are not always used effectively to encourage students to evaluate their learning. Students know how well they are doing and marking is regular, though inconsistent in giving students guidance on how to improve in future.
106. Teachers work well together. Those with responsibility have some opportunity to lead in their areas through regular department meetings. However, departmental procedures are not set out sufficiently clearly and the subject development plan is sketchy. Procedures to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and student progress are not formalised, and so the department is not entirely clear about what is particularly good and where improvements would be beneficial.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

107. Students display good competence in mathematics. They have satisfactory opportunities to use their good mathematical knowledge and skills in other subjects. Examples of successful promotion of mathematical knowledge and skills include art, when students measure and scale up their original designs, and science, where students show good skills in mental arithmetic.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is good.

	<b>Years 7, 8 and 9</b>	<b>Years 10 and 11</b>
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have risen, and GCSE results improved dramatically in 2004
- Teachers' very good knowledge and experience of science means that they are good at teaching students the knowledge and skills required to do well
- Students enjoy science, and generally work well
- Teachers occasionally do not match the work well to students' needs, particularly in Years 7 and 8

### **Commentary**



108. Test results at the end of Year 9 were average in 2003, in relation to all schools nationally and those in which students gained similar results in their Year 6 tests three years earlier. The proportion who gained level 6 or above was better than nationally. Overall, the 2003 results indicate satisfactory achievement. In 2004, the boys' results were similar to those of the previous year, whereas the girls' results went up considerably.
109. Overall, GCSE results were average in 2003. Almost all the students gained grade G or better, and an above-average proportion gained grades A\* to C. The proportion of the year group who were entered was much higher than nationally, indicating that the department did well in enabling lower attainers and those with special educational needs to be successful. In 2004, the best results to date, the proportion of students attaining A\* or A grades increased dramatically.
110. Overall, standards are above the level expected for this stage of Years 9 and 11. For example, Year 9 students have a very good knowledge of how to rank metals in order of their reactivity, with higher-attaining students beginning to see patterns emerging as they explored whether reactivity is constant regardless of the reaction. Students' written work is generally good, with useful introductions to topics such as a spider diagram summarising the concepts to be learned. Higher-attaining Year 11 students understood the stages of mitosis in terms of the phases of the cell cycle. Very good use of ICT, showing animations of the process, helped the students to see how cells divide and grow. Lower-attaining students made good gains in work on inherited diseases, learning about dominant and recessive genes. Their knowledge was sound, but they needed considerable help to write information down correctly.
111. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables them to explain the work clearly. They present complex scientific concepts using simple terms, with a variety of well-chosen resources. For instance, the graphical feeding relationship between prey and predators was demonstrated by means of an interactive whiteboard, and video footage was used to show the composition of blood.
112. Where the teaching and learning were very good, students' own knowledge and understanding of key concepts was explored by the teacher, as when food chains and food webs were discussed using Year 8 students' own ideas of a predator. Students know what is expected of them. They co-operate very well with each other, behave sensibly including in practical work, and are keen to learn. In the less successful lessons, teachers did not make sufficient use of questioning, especially to extend the learning of the higher-attaining students. The range of activities was quite narrow, and insufficient time was given to checking what students were learning and to providing feedback and guidance.
113. The good leadership and management of the department have contributed to the rising standards, particularly in GCSE. Clear and comprehensive policies and procedures are in place. Improvements since the last inspection include the introduction of a modular science course in Years 10 and 11. Assessment information is now used well to track students' progress and to identify those who need additional support or guidance. Areas for further development include increasing the use of ICT within the science curriculum, and providing students with more opportunities to develop their skills in scientific enquiry through practical work.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

	<b>Years 7, 8 and 9</b>	<b>Years 10 and 11</b>
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good

Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good
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Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement in the GNVQ vocational course in Years 10 and 11 is very good
- An innovative scheme of work has been adopted in Year 8
- Good leadership is contributing to the department's improvement
- The use of ICT for measurement and control is not covered well enough

## **Commentary**

114. Teacher assessments of Year 9 students' work in 2003 were well above the national average overall, but did not take into account gaps in students' coverage of National Curriculum requirements. The 2004 assessments were not quite as high, but are more realistic. In 2003, the results in the GNVQ Intermediate examination were above average overall. The 2004 results are even better.
115. The standards observed in lessons and in students' work reflect the improving pattern of results, especially in the GNVQ examination. By Year 9, students are confident in the area of computer communications, including the use of word processing and desktop publishing programmes, and in creating web pages. Students are less confident in the use of databases and software to design, measure and control, because these areas of the ICT curriculum have been given less attention. Students following the GNVQ ICT course confidently use a wide range of software. They are good at using the Internet to research information, and in evaluating and improving their work independently.
116. Teachers have very good subject expertise, and make very effective use of the ICT resources. They provide clear explanations of the tasks for each lesson, and of the quality of work they expect. Students are encouraged to share their learning and to help each other. Those on the GNVQ course have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. Their teachers provide them with constant verbal feedback, which contributes to students making very good progress. Homework sometimes makes a good contribution to students' learning, but this is inconsistent.
117. Purposeful leadership and management of the subject have contributed to the recent rise in standards. The National Strategy schemes of work have been adopted, which means that the curriculum now covers all the areas of the National Curriculum better. In Year 8, an imaginative approach that integrates English and ICT demonstrates to students the importance of ICT as a tool. The vocational GNVQ course is very successful. Accommodation and resources for ICT are now good. Each of the seven specialist rooms has a SmartBoard, which is skilfully used by teachers. An additional computer network room is due to come into operation in 2005. The areas for further development include checking that students in all year groups are equally well provided for, and that all areas of the curriculum are covered sufficiently.

## **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

118. The number of computers available for other subjects to use has increased substantially since the last inspection. The computers are intensively used as the school still has insufficient for the needs of all subject areas. This is about to change as the school is building a new facility which will include a library with a substantial number of computers for students' use. Students generally have very good computer skills, and are proficient at using programmes such as Word and PowerPoint to enhance their schoolwork. Parts of the ICT curriculum are taught through English and mathematics, these teachers working in close cooperation with specialist ICT staff. In geography, history and modern languages, good use is made of ICT resources to encourage learning. For example, German homework carried out in the form of a PowerPoint presentation was presented to the rest of the group. This good use of ICT across the curriculum is helping to raise students' attainment within ICT.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

### Main strengths

- Students do especially well in their GCSE course, and results are well above average
- Teachers have very good expertise in their subject and examination requirements
- The introduction of the National Strategy is leading to learning activities being well planned and successful
- Excellent leadership and management result in a rigorous drive to improve standards

### Commentary

119. Results of the 2003 Year 9 teacher assessments were above those reported nationally. In 2004, the assessments were that students had done even better. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above average. The percentage of A\* and A grades was twice the national figure, showing that higher-attaining students did very well. The same is true for lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs as everyone gained grade G or better, and nearly nine-tenths gained grade C or better. In 2004, the results rose further. The results are much better than reported by the last inspection.
120. Students start Year 7 with average understanding and skills in geography, and their attainment in Year 9 shows very good achievement. Progress is even more marked in Years 10 and 11, and these students' achievement is exceptional given their attainment at the start of the GCSE course. Most students exceeded their targets for last year and they did better than in their other school subjects. Students' literacy skills are strong and so their written work is often very good, which contributes to their examination success. Fieldwork is another notable strength, which broadens students' experience and gives them a relevant context for developing their skills and understanding.
121. Teachers have a very positive relationship with students, and expect high standards from them. The implementation of the approaches of the National Strategy is contributing to standards rising. Lessons are carefully planned, with a consistently clear structure of starter, main activity and closing summary. Teachers adopt enjoyable and sometimes innovative methods, including very imaginative use of new ICT equipment. As a result, students have very good attitudes to learning, and they collaborate, concentrate and participate very well in lesson activities. A particular strength in the teaching of students in Years 10 and 11 is that teachers focus on learning by objectives, linked to assessment and examination criteria. Students produce excellent coursework because their skills in guided research and investigation are very well supported by teachers' skills and examination experience. However, they are rather too dependent on this help. Also, although their skills are good, students make too little use of ICT in lessons.
122. The department has an excellent ethos of purpose and mutual support, as teachers have a strong, shared commitment to improving students' performance. The department has good plans for what to do next, particularly for the development of ICT.

## History

Provision in history is excellent.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent	Excellent

  

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

### Main strengths

- Teachers have excellent subject expertise, and students enjoy the challenges they are set
- Students' results are consistently well above national averages
- The leadership and management of the subject are excellent
- Literacy skills are very well developed within the history curriculum
- Links with other subject areas are very good

### Commentary

123. Students enter the school in Year 7 with a broadly average knowledge of history. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average in 2003, indicating that students achieved very well. GCSE results in 2003 were also well above average, and rose further in 2004. In 2003, students did considerably better in history than in their other subjects.
124. The standard of work seen during the inspection reflects these results. For example, Year 9 students have developed a clear understanding of Brighton during Georgian and Regency periods. In Year 10, students' visits to archaeological sites and the battlefields of Europe enable them to discuss historical concepts and issues with confidence. GCSE coursework is of a high standard as challenging tasks are set. For example, students have examined the thoughts of Mao Zedong and the Long March, and have a good knowledge of how the Red Army came into power. Students' handwritten and word processed work is very well presented and illustrated. Essays are well argued, with introductions, commentaries and logical conclusions. In all years, the achievement of students with special educational needs is at least as good as that of their peers.
125. Lessons are very well planned, balanced and imaginative, using a wide range of primary and secondary source materials. This provides breadth and variety, capturing and retaining the students' interest. Re-enactments provide elements of fun as well as reinforcing learning. Students respond well to their teachers' high expectations of work and behaviour, and consequently no time is wasted in lessons. The needs of higher- and lower-attaining students are very well catered for through extension exercises or simplified texts. Therefore students of all levels of attainment leave each lesson with a strong sense of achievement and improved knowledge. Literacy skills are very well promoted, and students use a wide range of historical vocabulary with accuracy and confidence. They read texts aloud and with clarity and expression. ICT is used well by teachers and students alike. Students' cultural development is strongly enhanced, for example through studying contemporary paintings of Regency Brighton, or the fashions of Jane Austen's Bath.
126. The quality of leadership of the excellent team of history specialists is outstanding. Teachers specialize within the subject by developing their particular interests, such as co-ordinating the teaching of Russian, Roman, Greek and local history. This results in exceptionally well

managed and co-ordinated teaching with a very high level of expertise deployed to its best advantage for the students' learning. The impact of this is evident in the growing popularity of history at GCSE and in the high number of passes at grades A\* to C.

127. Good quality text books are supplemented by high quality thematic booklets prepared by the department for each aspect of historical study. These cater for all abilities. Additionally, there is a small bank of primary source material. Off-site visits to museums, Roman villas, archaeological sites and European battlefields further enhance the curriculum. Assessment is very well managed and the information used to help teachers improve the subject. For example, two new historical topics have been introduced to encourage more boys to follow history at GCSE level. Therefore the gender gap of previous years has significantly reduced, with boys now achieving similarly to girls. Citizenship, literacy and ICT are planned into the curriculum, although numeracy, which is satisfactory, is less well developed. Strong links with other curriculum subjects are made, and history makes an excellent contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The last inspection reported very good standards. There are now no issues to be addressed in history. This represents very good improvement.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths

- GCSE results are improving because students are given good guidance and support
- Students' work shows creativity and they are skilful at design drawing, which is encouraged by teachers constantly referring to high quality examples
- Teachers have strong expertise in the subject, and in helping students do well in tests and examinations

### Commentary

128. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were below the national average in 2003. However, standards are now higher than this. Girls did better than boys in the teacher assessments. GCSE results at A\* to C were above the national average overall in 2003. Girls did better than boys, although both did less well in design and technology than in their other subjects. Results improved greatly in 2004. Under half of the students take GCSE, a lower proportion than nationally.
129. Students have varied previous experience of design and technology at the start of Year 7, but overall their attainment at the start of the year is average. Students do well in Years 7 to 9 because of good teaching. In particular, teachers constantly refer to examples of good practice, and show high quality work done by previous students. The very good behaviour and positive attitudes seen in lessons assist in students doing well. In Year 9, students make rapid progress because their design work mirrors closely the style of GCSE folder work. A display of

Year 9 practical work showed very creative and humorous designs of automata that had a good finish. In Years 10 and 11, students do well because of their teachers' frequent reference to successful practice at GCSE. Gifted and talented students produce exceptional work in response to their teachers' high expectations and the challenging tasks they are set. Students with special educational needs, others who have English as an additional language, boys and lower-attaining students achieve well when they have access to appropriate ICT resources. However, the department has insufficient access to ICT equipment, and other equipment and facilities are old. This contributes to the department not covering the requirements for computer assisted design and manufacturing well enough.

130. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers have good subject expertise. GCSE students' work showed high-level creative drawing skills and good use of appropriate research to inspire new ideas, because teachers encourage creativity and good design practice. Teachers pay very good attention to the social, ethical, environmental and cultural issues influencing design. They give very good guidance to individual students linked to the GCSE examination requirements, but students in Years 7 to 9 receive insufficient feedback on how to improve the quality of their work. In particular, students' evaluative thinking is not matched sufficiently to the design specifications.
131. The staffing of design and technology is very good as the teachers have experience as professional designers, and so are able to provide very good role models for students. Reviews of the department's work are excellent, identifying and prioritising its next steps very clearly and well, building on the good work already done to improve the subject.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is very good.

	<b>Years 7, 8 and 9</b>	<b>Years 10 and 11</b>
Standards	Above average	Very high
Achievement	Good	Excellent
Teaching and Learning	Good	Excellent

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

### **Main strengths**

- Students do very well in GCSE examinations
- Students in all years are inspired and motivated by the teachers' own work
- Students have very good attitudes and are keen to learn
- The department makes a powerful contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school
- The high quality feedback given to students is underpinned by the excellent relationships between teachers and students

### **Commentary**

132. Teacher assessments in 2004 show standards at the end of Year 9 to be broadly at the level expected for students of this age. Girls have done better than boys, as is the case nationally. Results in GCSE examinations have been maintained at very high levels for several years. Boys' results are considerably better than the national average and girls' results are outstanding. In 2003 a very high proportion gained the highest grades (A\* and A). The 2004 results reflect similar very high standards.

133. The good progress students make in Years 7 and 8 is built upon very successfully in Year 9. Here, a combination of very good teaching and the introduction of an ever-wider range of experiences give students great personal satisfaction and a sense of pride and joy in their work. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Two weaknesses in this otherwise very positive picture relate to the standard of work in sketchbooks not always being as high as that of the work done in lessons, and insufficient use of computers other than for research tasks. However, a wide range of experiences teach students good drawing skills, and this provides a very secure platform for further study for the students who take art at GCSE level.
134. By Year 11 students' technical and expressive skills are very high and their achievement is excellent. Students write and speak knowledgeably about their own work and that of the artists they are studying. Work journals demonstrate very high levels of visual and written investigation. For example, in a project on the Expressionist movement students referred to the contextual issues and influences that had a bearing on the work of Otto Dix, Oskar Kokoschka and Max Beckmann. Students' excellent self-portraits demonstrate an advanced understanding of colour and the style of the work. In a Year 11 lesson, students gave short presentations that enabled them to share their thoughts and ideas and to learn from one another. Students have above average standards of literacy that complement their studies in art and design, and contribute to their GCSE success.
135. In all years students benefit from the high quality exemplar material, including teachers' own work. This raises students' expectations, inspires and motivates them. A rigorous and imaginative curriculum introduces students to a wide range of practical experiences and develops their investigative skills. A particular strength of the teaching lies in the quality of relationships that underpin the excellent and challenging feedback students receive on their work and progress, particularly in the GCSE course. Learning was observed to be particularly effective where teachers' careful questioning encouraged students to be more reflective and evaluative in their comments. In examination classes, the use and understanding of examination marking criteria provides teachers and students with a very clear structure on which to review their achievement and identify where improvements are still possible. Learning objectives are less clearly identified in Years 7 to 9, which is one of the reasons for these students not progressing as fast as those doing GCSE work.
136. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school. Work displayed in art rooms and around the school is respected and valued. The innovative curriculum, master classes and staff development opportunities, along with the outstanding teamwork and the professionalism of the staff, create powerful learning opportunities for both teachers and students. Very high standards have been maintained since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the accommodation. However the shortage of computers continues to limit opportunities for younger students to explore their creative potential for image manipulation.

### Music

Provision in music is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	



**Main strengths**

- Students do very well in GCSE examinations
- Teachers have very good subject expertise, which helps them to provide stimulating lessons
- Students are given very good information on how well they have done and guidance on what to do to improve their work
- The curriculum and the opportunities for instrumental tuition are very good

**Commentary**

137. The overall result of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 was well above average in 2003. However, these assessments were not based on sufficiently strong evidence and appear to have been too high. Inspection evidence showed that standards are above average at the end of Year 9. Standards in singing are particularly strong. Students are good at using appropriate musical language, reading musical notation and understanding graphic scores. Students do least well in keyboard playing as instruments have been provided only recently. Class sizes in all year groups are low, enabling teachers to give in a high level of individual tuition. This is of particular benefit to students who do not have extra instrumental lessons.
138. GCSE results were well above average in 2003. The proportion of students who gained grades A\* or A was twice that nationally, and almost all those who took the examination gained grade C or better. The 2004 results were similar, and the subject remained more popular than in most schools. Standards of composition are particularly high at GCSE level. Students use complex musical language to describe the music they listen to and play, and show a strong spiritual and cultural awareness. All groups of students achieve well because tasks set are appropriately challenging as they are adapted to suit individual needs. Students receive individual support from teachers in practical lessons and their written work is carefully marked with clear targets set for improvement.
139. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and are able, practical musicians who provide very good role models for the students. Tasks are well planned, both challenging and reinforcing what students already know. Relationships are good, resulting in a calm atmosphere in which students work well together. Where teaching was very good, a wide variety of tasks inspired students to perform at a high level. Students composed and improvised their own pieces, identifying how to improve them, and they understood and used appropriate technical language to describe the music they were studying. Well-established classroom routines based on common musical practice generally ensure that students remain focused even in practical lessons that require a lot of noise. An occasional weakness was that students became restless and noisy because the activities were too easy, lacking a clear purpose and firm management.
140. Assessment is very good, particularly at GCSE level. Here, individual targets are set to help students understand how they can improve their work. In Years 7 to 9, marking is thorough and encouraging.
141. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, with strengths in the continuing success in the standards students achieve. The school has well-advanced plans to tackle shortage of ICT resources, and to improve the accommodation for music. Good teamwork, informed by a clear vision for the future of the department, means that teachers help each other and share good practice. The music department makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, it provides a very good breadth of opportunity for music-making outside the school day. However the take-up of these activities is low, particularly in view of the large number of students who have instrumental lessons in a wide range of instruments.

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is very good.

	<b>Years 7, 8 and 9</b>	<b>Years 10 and 11</b>
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

### **Main strengths**

- GCSE results were well above average
- Teachers have high expectations and very good subject expertise, which contribute to students' very positive attitudes towards the subject
- An extra-curricular programme offers excellent enrichment opportunities for all students
- Strong leadership is helping to create a climate for improvement

### **Commentary**

142. The results of the Year 9 teacher assessments were above average overall in 2003. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national averages, both overall and in the proportion who gained grades A\* to C. Students did very well as all gained grade G or better, and the vast majority (four fifths of those who took the examination) gained grade C or better. In 2004, the results were similar.
143. Overall, standards are average when students start Year 7. Students soon improve their skills. This was noticeable in hockey, as students used dodging techniques to good effect and hand signals to communicate their direction of movement. Because of the emphasis on individual development through a balanced programme of activities, students reach above average standards by Year 9. They understand the techniques for tackling in rugby and the principles of the maul. In gymnastics, they know how to do a handstand and how to link several movements into a sequence. They can support a partner safely, know the names of major muscle groups and do appropriate stretches for a warm up. They understand rules and have a good grasp of how to apply different tactics.
144. High expectations and careful preparation lead to very good success in GCSE examinations. Students in Years 10 and 11 are particularly successful in their analysis of strengths and weaknesses associated with a personal exercise plan, they have very good ball control and accurate shooting skills in basketball, and above average skills in a range of dance techniques. Students who are not taking GCSE in physical education have developed a confident approach to learning and their standards above average.
145. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable, and set high expectations for the students. Lessons are planned carefully to enable students to learn through a variety of activities. However, planning does not always take sufficient account of students' levels of ability in mixed-ability classes. A strong feature of students' learning is their high level of concentration which keeps them focusing on the tasks, and they respond very well to their teachers' praise and encouragement. In GCSE, homework is regularly completed and coursework is of a good quality. Teachers provide constructive comments when marking work. Ongoing assessment is a good feature of lessons and helps students to improve.
146. Physical education makes a strong contribution to students' personal development. It contributes to the spiritual ethos through its emphasis on inclusion and developing the individual. Social and moral development is a strong feature of the extra-curricular programme for physical education. Students of all ages have very good attitudes to learning and are very well behaved. They are co-operative and have a mature approach to games playing, and a strong sense of fair play.
147. Leadership of the subject provides very clear direction for its future development. The physical education staff are appropriately qualified and have clearly-defined responsibilities. This helps

the department to run efficiently. Departmental documentation is very good. The curriculum is well balanced, with an extensive 'core' curriculum programme that provides opportunities for two hours' physical education for all students. This has a good impact on the standards students attain. Equal access to sport includes rugby and football for girls and boys. The outdoor education programme encourages students to experience adventurous activities. The strengths identified by the last inspection have been maintained, and standards are rising. The extra-curricular programme continues to offer an excellent range of activities that are taken up by a large number of students.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Provision for citizenship is good.

	<b>Years 7, 8 and 9</b>	<b>Years 10 and 11</b>
Standards	Above national expectations	Above national expectations
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Not applicable

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students learn well because of good teaching by very experienced teachers
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good
- Students take an active part in the daily life of their school and support their local community well through charitable activities
- Students' knowledge, skills and understanding are not assessed well enough

## **Commentary**

148. By the end of Year 9, standards are above the expectation for students of this age. Students gain a good knowledge and understanding of being a citizen. By the end of Year 11, standards are also above expectations. Students have a good grasp of what citizenship entails. All play a part in the democratic processes of the school. They contribute to local charities and are aware of global issues, such as Third World poverty.
149. Students enter the school with average knowledge, understanding and skills of citizenship. Their achievement by the end of Year 9 is therefore good. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is less good than earlier, mainly because limited time is available for citizenship within the option structure. However, citizenship issues are regularly brought up in history, geography, religious education, work-related education and PSHE.
150. Teachers use a wide range of activities to stimulate students' interest and ensure a positive response to relevant issues. Good teaching in Years 7 to 9 develops students' self confidence and their listening, understanding and discussion skills well, contributing to their positive attitudes towards the subject. Teachers are skilful in capturing students' interest, as when a Year 8 class analysed the characteristics of good citizenship with reference to the characters in the television programme 'The Simpsons'. In several lessons in which the teaching was very good, key strengths were the teachers' use of questioning and collaborative activities. Students with special educational needs are very well supported, ensuring that they can take a full part in lessons. Limited assessment means that students are not aware of how well they are doing by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, nor do they know enough about how they can do better.
151. The introduction of the citizenship programme has been well led. Good planning has been developed, to ensure that the content of the National Curriculum for citizenship is covered within the limited time available. Monitoring of how teaching affects students' learning is too informal at present. However, regular team-teaching leads to good exchange of ideas. Charity work, visiting speakers and work placements enhance the curriculum. All students have opportunities to take part in a democratic process during the election of representatives to year and school councils. These give good scope for students to make decisions and take responsible action on a variety of issues.

## **Personal, social and health education (PSHE)**

152. The school has very good arrangements for PSHE. Students entering the school in Year 7 have a very good induction programme. Students in Years 7 to 9 commented very favourably on the support that they had received from older students when they started. PSHE sessions explore issues such as bullying, smoking, drugs and crime. These help students better understand everyday situations that are very relevant to their lives. The lesson topics are taught with considerable sensitivity, and further support is provided by the highly-skilled inclusion team and other staff with responsibilities for students' care and personal development.
153. PSHE work is inter-linked with citizenship, allowing students to look at wide-ranging issues such as human rights and responsibilities. Students develop good skills of enquiry and communication. The activities make a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### *Level 3 GCE 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	24	100	80	100	24	56	30
Photography	17	71	n/a	51	n/a	51	n/a
Biology	23	83	65	35	11	35	21
Business studies	24	75	76	0	16	21	26
Chemistry	10	90	73	60	14	40	24
Critical thinking	4	100	n/a	25	n/a	35	n/a
Design	10	100	75	10	15	35	25
Drama	17	100	87	47	20	42	31
Economics	28	86	74	32	20	37	26
English language	33	96	83	42	18	41	29
English literature	16	100	86	50	19	41	30
French	9	100	78	44	19	41	28
German	3	100	82	33	19	40	29
Geography	37	92	74	43	20	41	27
General studies	150	71	74	15	18	26	26
History	20	85	81	45	20	37	29
ICT	20	90	67	15	11	30	21
Law	5	80	n/a	20	n/a	26	n/a
Mathematics	26	76	62	38	17	32	22
Media studies	13	77	86	23	24	29	32
Music	7	100	87	28	21	37	31
Physical education	13	91	73	15	11	31	23
Physics	15	73	69	13	14	25	23
Psychology	84	87	n/a	30	n/a	35	n/a
Religious studies	16	87	80	50	27	38	30
Sociology	10	60	72	30	18	24	25
Spanish	6	100	79	67	18	50	27

### 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	23	100.0	98.6	87.0	50.2	103.5	87.5
Biology	20	95.0	96.4	35.0	39.2	86.0	78.6
Business studies	14	100.0	98.7	57.1	36.8	90.0	80.1
Chemistry	17	95.0	97.6	23.5	49.0	74.1	84.9
Media studies	30	100.0	99.4	40.0	37.8	86.0	82.1
Drama	12	100.0	99.5	16.7	40.1	80.0	83.6
Economics	15	100.0	98.9	27.0	52.0	82.5	88.3
English language	14	100.0	99.4	7.1	36.3	65.7	80.9
English literature	24	100.0	99.5	44.0	46.5	88.8	86.5
French	8	89.0	98.8	51.0	51.5	82.9	87.6
Design and technology	13	100.0	97.8	69.2	35.0	96.9	77.9
Geography	18	88.0	98.7	66.0	44.5	97.5	84.0
German	2	100.0	98.4	100.0	47.9	110.0	84.8
History	15	94.0	99.0	27.0	44.6	78.6	84.6
Information technology	20	100.0	95.6	26.3	24.6	71.6	69.5
Mathematics	26	100.0	96.7	50.0	55.6	90.0	88.8
Music	3	100.0	98.8	0.0	38.9	66.7	81.1
Other languages	3	100.0	96.9	33.3	64.5	86.7	93.8
Physical education	10	100.0	98.0	20.0	30.9	68.0	75.2
Physics	5	100.0	96.7	60.0	44.6	92.0	82.7
Psychology	42	95.0	97.4	55.0	42.7	93.0	81.8
Religious studies	6	100.0	98.8	83.3	46.7	100.0	85.6
Sociology	14	100.0	98.2	35.7	44.3	78.6	83.6
Spanish	1	100.0	98.3	100.0	50.2	120.0	86.9
Business (VCE course)	24	100.0	65.0	16.7	14.6	68.3	60.1
Health and social care (VCE course)	13	100.0	67.7	15.4	14.5	72.3	63.5

### Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Intermediate GNVQ	18	100.0	n/a	11.0	n/a	0.0	n/a
Health and social care Intermediate GNVQ	8	100.0	n/a	14.0	n/a	0.0	n/a

n/a

means

results

were

not

available

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English, French and German. Drama, media studies, and Spanish were sampled.

154. **Drama** results were average in 2003, and rose considerably higher in 2004. Students also did well in **media studies** in 2004. In the Year 13 lesson seen during the inspection, students made good progress in learning the conventions of romantic comedy. The evidence indicated that their achievement during the course is good. In the last two years, a small number of students from the local community entered A-level **Arabic** privately, and were successful. **Spanish** was taken by too few students to make national comparisons reliable, but those who have taken AS and A2 have generally gained grades A or B. In the Spanish lesson observed, Year 12 students made good gains in their knowledge of tenses during a listening comprehension activity, although they were finding the level of the AS course very demanding.

### English

Provision in English is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths

- Students achieve well and English literature results are above average
- Teaching is consistently good and assessment is used very well
- The curriculum and lessons are thoroughly planned; teachers draw on a wide range of world literature
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and relationships are very good
- Teachers show great commitment to their students' success
- The subject makes a considerable contribution to students' personal development

### Commentary

155. Results in English literature A-level were above the national average in 2003. A-level literature results have been better than those for English language, which were well below the national average in 2003 but average the previous year. Results in both courses rose considerably in 2004. More girls than boys take English literature and English language and, in 2003, boys outperformed girls in both subjects. The overall results of the very few students who left the courses after AS level were well below the national average in 2003. Other students retook papers and improved their grades.
156. Students start their sixth form studies in English with overall average attainment at GCSE. They are very well motivated to do well. Their written work in literary criticism and their contributions in lessons indicate that their achievement is good in the A-level courses. The quality of their longer essays improves markedly from Year 12 to Year 13. This is a result of in-depth discussions in class before students write their essays, followed by thorough, diagnostic marking by teachers. Students' progress is constantly monitored by teachers and form tutors. Students know how well they are doing and where they need to improve. They are very appreciative of the time and support their teachers give them.



157. Teaching and learning are good. Texts are well-chosen to be intellectually demanding. The literature studied is linked to contemporary and spiritual issues by skilful and enthusiastic teaching and, in its relevance and interest, promotes good personal development in the students. In most lessons, teachers adopt a seminar style and make use of small group and pair work. This requires all students to participate actively in reading, discussion and note taking before feeding back their ideas to the class. From assessments of the quality of students' work, teachers have a clear idea of students' prior attainment, their current performance and appropriate targets. They make very good use of this information to help students make progress.
158. Subject leadership is good and the courses offered by the faculty are well managed. The department draws successfully on the skills of its large team of staff, and makes links where possible with other subjects. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

159. Standards of literacy are very good across the sixth form curriculum. Students write a range of detailed accounts at length. They use complex linguistic terms in modern foreign languages, and produce high quality, analytical essays for geography, history English and art. They have many opportunities for discussion, debate and collaborative group work, which develop their language skills. The maturity, sophistication and flair students display in speaking and listening is a particular strength. Although it is currently well managed and supervised, sixth form study space in the school library is restricted. The school has well advanced plans to overcome this limitation on students' opportunities for independent reading and research when the new library is open and sixth form students have their own private study area.

### **French**

Provision in French is good.

	<b>Years 12 and 13</b>
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good linguists provide good teaching in well-structured lessons
- A strong emphasis on acquisition of grammar underpins students' language skills
- Teachers know their students well and give them good advice on how to improve
- Students have positive attitudes and enjoy their learning
- Lower-attaining students sometimes find the work very difficult

### **Commentary**

160. AS level results in French were well above average in 2003, whereas the A level results were average. As a small number of students have taken the examination, valid comparisons between years cannot be made. French is increasingly popular in Year 12, with fifteen students (mostly girls) currently taking the AS course, several of whom are bilingual. They have made a good transition to cope with the wider range of learning materials in use at AS level.
161. Standards are above the expectations for this stage in the course, in Years 12 and 13. In both years students' assignments show that they generally have a good level of knowledge.

Students achieve well because of the good teaching. Year 12 students are being encouraged to manipulate complex grammatical structures, developing and consolidating their existing knowledge of tenses. For example, through questions pitched at the right level of difficulty, a teacher expertly guided Year 12 students so that by the end of the lesson all were able to produce statements using the conditional tense. By Year 13, higher attainers communicate at a sophisticated level. For example, students were involved in a debate concerning building a stadium locally and the effect this would have on the environment and the local people. There was evidence of adequate preparation but the students' spoken French had too many inaccuracies. After the presentations, the majority of the students were unable to respond to unpredictable questions.

162. Teachers have a high level of subject knowledge and expertise and in most lessons make judicious use of French to promote language skills. A strong emphasis upon teaching grammar creates a sound foundation for students' linguistic development. Teachers have high expectations and present students with challenging tasks using materials that extend their oral and comprehension skills, but the tasks are sometimes too difficult for the lower-attaining students. They often find it difficult to follow the pace of the lesson and are unable to extract information from spoken authentic material. Students have very positive attitudes to their studies and are ready to put forward ideas and to learn from their mistakes. ICT is not used consistently and students have too few opportunities for personal research. Overall, assessment is good and work is marked diligently: Most teachers provide clear guidance on how students might improve. The department shares a commitment to raise standards.

### German

Provision in German is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Not reported in the last inspection

### Main strengths

- Standards are well above expectations for this stage of the A-level course
- Students are achieving very well because of expert teaching
- The subject is increasingly popular

### Commentary

163. A very small number of students took A-level German in 2003, gaining grades A or B. No students were entered for the A/S examination in 2003. The standard attained by students Year 13 is well above the expectation for this stage in the course. Many of the students passed AS German in 2004 with grade C, and the standards currently attained therefore show very good achievement. Students are able to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings with confidence. They have an extensive working vocabulary and have a good grasp of grammar, although some struggle for accuracy. They speak with good pronunciation and read fluently.
164. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and of the demands of the examination syllabus. They use German skilfully to encourage students to express their ideas and to develop very good skills in listening comprehension. Teachers are well prepared and set high

expectations. Materials are appropriate to the students' needs, but very occasionally the students struggle to cope with the very high demands made on them. However, the students' enjoyment of their studies is obvious and they rise to the challenges. Students use ICT well to present their work in an interesting manner. Teachers are skilful in finding an effective path between teacher-led activities and encouraging the students' independent learning.

165. German is an increasingly popular and successful course. Leadership of German is excellent, setting an excellent role model and promoting very effective team work. A strong desire to succeed permeates the teaching and this is reflected in the excellent attitudes shown by the students.

## MATHEMATICS

The school provides courses in mathematics and further mathematics, including modules of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. The focus was on mathematics.

### Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good subject knowledge of teachers encourages students to learn
- Relationships in the classroom are positive
- Higher-attaining students are insufficiently challenged

### Commentary

#### Standards

166. Results in the A-level examinations in 2003 were above average at the end of Year 13, having risen considerably from the previous year. AS level results were also above average in 2003. In 2004, the Year 13 results were similar to those of the year before, while the AS results at grades A to E fell. Each year, a few sixth-form students who re-sit GCSE examinations improve their result to a grade C.
167. Standards are currently in line with the expectations for this stage of the course. Project work is successfully sustained over time, for example in statistics where real data sets are collected, compared and analysed competently. Students show good understanding of the graphs of various functions, and the effects on graphs of transformations of the functions. Some higher-attaining students are not given enough extension work, and the learning of other students is inhibited by their relatively weak skills in algebra.
168. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to plan lessons in which potential areas of difficulty are anticipated well, as in a very good Year 12 lesson where focused questioning developed students' knowledge of quadratics to completing the square and deriving the quadratic formula. Working relationships are uniformly good, and students are encouraged to discuss and develop their understanding. However, many students are very dependent on their teachers partly because of a lack of variety in teaching style, and the pace of lessons tends to be slow. Too little use is made of ICT, which inhibits standards including in project work. Marking of students' work is thorough but sometimes the advice given is too brief or unclear.
169. Satisfactory provision has been maintained since the last inspection. The department runs smoothly, and co-operative teamwork is encouraged. The departmental development plan has identified relevant areas for improvement. Weakness in the Year 12 results have led to changes that have contributed to standards rising. In particular, the National Strategy for teaching in Years 7 to 9 has influenced some teachers to plan successful three-part lessons, with an introduction to what is to be learned in the lesson, opportunities for students to work on the task and a final review of what they have learned. However, schemes of work have not yet

been revised for the new 2004 examination specifications, and the department provides too little guidance to teachers, for example on setting short-term targets for students and on developing their literacy skills within mathematics.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

170. Basic mathematical skills support students' study particularly well in subjects such as art, where students show well-developed spatial awareness, and physics, where students interpret and use graphs very well. Students use mathematical formulae and functions capably in spreadsheets in ICT. Biology students make good use of both mental mathematics and calculators in computing the sizes of cells seen under the microscope. However, students have difficulty with certain topics in chemistry because of weaknesses in their mathematical skills.

### SCIENCE

The focus was on biology and chemistry. **Physics** was sampled. A-level results were well above average in 2003. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning were excellent. The students' very good skills in mathematics helped them greatly when they calculated acceleration from velocity and time graphs.

### Biology

Provision in biology is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

### Main strengths

- Teachers' subject expertise and their high expectations make a strong contribution to teaching and learning being very good
- Students have a very positive attitude to learning and excellent relationships with their peers and staff
- Staff share a clarity of vision for future developments

### Commentary

171. A-level results were above average in 2003, and AS results were well above average. The results of the 2004 examination were similar to those for 2003.
172. The standard students are now attaining is well above the expectation for this stage of the course, and their achievement is very good. Students of all ages use biological terms confidently and correctly, showing good knowledge of the subject. For example, Year 12 students presented the molecular structure of proteins clearly to the class, and Year 13 students explained the chemical processes involved in Krebs cycle in detail, using the correct vocabulary. Students also have good skills in practical work. For example, Year 12 students used microscopes to measure the organelles of a cell and calculate the size of structures observed. All students were able to set up the microscopes without guidance, and had sufficient numeracy skills to complete the mathematical conversions involved in the calculations. Students' written work is also of good quality.

173. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and are skilled at enabling students to understand new concepts. Lessons are carefully planned to build on students' existing knowledge and skills, and to develop these further. For example, Year 13 students were expected to recall complex chemical structures in order to understand fully the biological processes used to convert ADP into ATP. Teachers respond expertly to individual difficulties with explanations that help each student to make good progress. Lessons are taught at a good pace. However, the timetabled sixty-minute lessons are too short for some practicals, which students have to complete outside normal lesson time. They do this as they are highly motivated. Students are encouraged to develop independent study skills and to assess their own work. For example, teachers set homework which requires students to read background information and then complete assessment exercises to check their understanding and identify any misconceptions. Marking is thorough, with diagnostic comments to advise students how to improve their work. Relationships between students, their peers and staff are excellent. Students discuss work freely with each other and are prepared to identify problems openly.
174. There was little specific reference to A-level biology in the last report, but the evidence suggests that improvement since then is very good. This has been brought about by the excellent way in which biology is led and managed. Students' assessment data is tracked and used to diagnose their learning needs throughout the duration of the course. A detailed long-term curriculum plan identifies the topics in the syllabus to be taught by each member of staff, and teachers are linked to their specialist areas where possible. Learning is supported well by the technical team, and enrichment activities such as trips to complete field work take place.

### Chemistry

Provision for chemistry is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students make good progress, and have gained a pass at A level
- Teachers are very well-qualified, and provide well-paced lessons matched to students' needs
- Students are very positive about the subject and work very hard despite their difficulties with solving problems involving mathematics
- Leadership provides a clear vision focused on improving achievement
- Students have too few opportunities for learning independently

### Commentary

175. A-level results were below average in 2003. The results rose in 2004, with students doing better than had been predicted on the basis of their attainment at the start of Year 12. AS results were well above average in 2003. The course attracts students with a wide range of abilities, and so standards on entry to the course are below average. Students achieve well as they are determined to battle with aspects of the work that they find difficult. They learn and recall facts very well, but often struggle to apply them to problem solving, especially when the problems are numerical.

176. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach it enthusiastically. This led to an air of excitement amongst Year 12 students, who made good progress in preparing a standard solution. Lessons are carefully planned and timed so that the pace is brisk. Teachers are good at explaining ideas and encouraging students to ask questions if they do not understand. This was evident in a Year 13 lesson which had been planned because students had had difficulty with problems involving enthalpy changes. Effective use was made of practical work so that students could link this with theory. Students were then encouraged to work through the calculation together. Very effective use is made of examination questions so that students know what is required of them. Students feel well supported by staff, finding them readily available, but have too few opportunities for tasks that encourage study skills such as research and extended writing.
177. There is a clear vision for the department, focused on high levels of teaching and learning, which the whole team shares. Assessment data is thoroughly studied so that adjustments can be made to teaching schemes. As a result, workbooks have been developed to support learning in class and help students practice examination techniques. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with standards rising, the subject being increasingly popular with students, and the accommodation now being good.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

	<b>Years 12 and 13</b>
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

#### **Main strengths**

- Students do very well in ICT because of challenging teaching
- Teachers have very good subject and examination knowledge, and provide students with very good guidance
- The development of the subject has been led and managed very well

#### **Commentary**

178. Results in the AS and A-level examinations were above average in 2003. The proportion of higher grades increased in 2004. The subject is increasingly popular, and so Year 12 entries for both A-level and VCE were much higher than previously.
179. Students achieve very well in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 12. For example, in a very good Year 12 lesson on relational databases the teacher's clear demonstration using the electronic whiteboard encouraged this interested group of students to develop their understanding very rapidly. Year 13 students have very good practical skills in using spreadsheets, websites, management information systems and desktop publishing. They also have very good knowledge of how their skills will be assessed. Students' project work provides evidence of very good learning over an extended period of time, for example in the design, implementation and evaluation of databases. VCE students have gained from the department's increasing experience with vocationally-based courses, and have a very good understanding of the requirements of clients and users.

180. Teachers are enthusiastic practitioners who are knowledgeable and up-to-date in their subject knowledge and, as a result of their experience as examiners and moderators, in the requirements of external assessment. They give students very good guidance. For example, Year 13 students are advised on how to improve their study habits, which contributes to the students developing a very serious approach to learning. Very good working relationships are established between teachers and students, and teachers confidently challenge students to reflect and to learn very well. The experience provided for them is appropriately challenging, and very good resources are used to improve achievement.
181. ICT resources and facilities, which were holding the subject back at the time of the last inspection, have been substantially improved in recent years. The curriculum has been enhanced by the recent introduction of a VCE course, and the department has initiated measures to give students increased benefit from assessments of their learning. Resources are very good, and department documentation is stimulating and thorough. Students are encouraged to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy, particularly in homework and project work.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

182. Students across the sixth form use their ICT skills competently, responsibly and independently, within and outside their subject study, for example in carrying out research, completing application forms and c.v. writing. In English, students make good use of the Internet. Students' good word processing skills mean that they prepare and present coursework essays well, including in history. Chemistry students use a wide range of ICT including data loggers and CD ROMs, and also give good PowerPoint presentations. Within art, a well-planned programme of provision for photography students includes many opportunities for using ICT. However, in several other areas including mathematics there is too little planned use of ICT.

### **HUMANITIES**

The focus was on geography, history and psychology. Economics, sociology, law and general studies were sampled.

183. **Economics** is a popular subject. Results were average in 2003, and remained at a similar level in 2004. In the lesson observed, students made very good gains in learning about the minimum wage as a solution to low pay, showing that they understand fiscal policy.
184. **Sociology** results were average in 2003. In 2004, the few students who took it at A-level were successful, but AS results were weaker. The teaching and learning in the Year 13 lesson observed were good.
185. **Law**, introduced recently, has attracted a good take-up of students. It uses a combination of distance learning via the Internet and class teaching. Under half the students taking AS passed in 2004, whereas the few who took law at A-level did very well. In the lesson observed, good teaching enabled Year 12 students to make satisfactory gains in their knowledge of judicial precedent as a source of law, even though they were not keen on staying for this lesson after the end of the school day.
186. **General studies** was sampled by observing two Year 12 lessons. Very good teaching engaged the students in thoughtful, focused discussion. In both lessons, the teachers were very successful in raising students' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is very good.

	<b>Years 12 and 13</b>
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Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

### **Main strengths**

- Students do very well as their learning is very well planned for, in lessons and throughout the courses studied
- Teachers are skilful and experienced in how to prepare students for examinations
- Students and teachers share a commitment to do well and to improve
- The department is excellently led and managed

### **Commentary**

187. In 2003, the Alevel results were well above average. Students did much better than in their other subjects, and both boys and girls exceeded national average. Students also did well at AS level in 2003. The trend at AS level is upward, whereas the A-level results fell in 2004.
188. Students' attainment is well above the expectation for this stage of their course, in both Years 12 and 13. Their knowledge of geography is very good and their skills in collaborative learning, discussion, categorisation and speculation are strong. The majority of students have a very good understanding of key ideas and methods for geography. In class discussion, they listen to each other, negotiate and if necessary agree to disagree in a very mature way. Students' written work is generally complex, extensive and meticulous.

189. Students start Year 12 with above-average attainment in geography. The department's analysis of progress data shows that the majority of students of all abilities exceed their targets at the successive stages of AS and A-level. Students' achievement is very good, and almost all meet the ambitious targets set for them. The students and their teachers share a strong focus on doing well in the subject. Teachers' coverage of the geography syllabuses is wide and detailed, and so students gain extensive knowledge of subject content, skills and examination techniques. Examination preparation and revision are very well integrated into units throughout the courses. Teaching is imaginative and very well resourced.
190. Both leadership and management are excellent, with the same strengths as in the main school. However, fieldwork opportunities have even more impact in the sixth form because they support students' more independent learning very well. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good because the sense of purpose and clear focus on improving standards have led to increasing success for students, and the subject is increasingly popular.

### History

The provision for history is excellent.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

### Main strengths

- Students work exceptionally well in the lesson activities, and this contributes to their excellent achievement
- Teachers' subject expertise is used to best effect
- The leadership and management of the subject are excellent
- Teachers promote students' literacy skills very successfully

### Commentary

191. A-level results were average in 2003, having risen considerably from the previous year. The 2004 results were better again, with over half the students gaining A or B grades. In 2004, history was a very popular subject, and a quarter of the students gained A or B grades at AS level.
192. Students achieve excellently in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 12. They work exceptionally well in groups to consider different aspects of a specific problem, coming together at the end to merge their ideas and present their conclusions to the whole class. Very good participation in brainstorming sessions was observed when Year 12 students identified the problems faced by the Tsar in modernising Russia. Year 13 students drew very well on their earlier learning to identify how previous situations affected legislation in poor-law reform and the Irish problems, in work examining the development of Britain in the mid-eighteenth century and the trials and tribulations of Robert Peel's government. Students date events without the need for notes, which indicates a good depth of knowledge. They use a range of contemporary and modern works to form their own conclusions, which they present to their peers using ICT.
193. The range of teachers' expertise and knowledge is excellent. Having one teacher responsible for and with specific expertise in each historical aspect gives continuity of approach and a wide insight into the topic. Teachers' specialist knowledge enables them to present

challenging ideas for students to consider, such as the Crimean War and its effect on the development of Russia. Lessons are very well paced, lively and fun. Students have confidence in and respect for their teachers. Literacy skills are very well promoted, and students use a wide range of historical vocabulary with accuracy and confidence. Their written and word processed work contains very coherent and well laid out arguments. Students list their sources of information, which is good preparation for university. The small number of students with special needs do very well in their essays as they are given excellent guidance and support.

194. The quality of leadership is outstanding and the subject is exceptionally well managed. Teachers' very high level of expertise is deployed to its best advantage. Good quality text books are supplemented with historical reference and a small bank of primary source documents. Off-site visits to museums and residential visits, such as to St Petersburg and Moscow, further consolidate and enhance students' learning. Assessment, which is based on examination requirements, is very well managed and the information gained informs departmental development. Strong links are made with other subjects. For example, consideration of citizenship is built into the study of the social and economic development of modern Britain. History makes an excellent contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
195. The last inspection reported good standards. The subject is increasingly popular, including with boys. There are now no significant weaknesses in history, which is very good improvement.

### Psychology

Provision in psychology is very good.

	<b>Years 12 and 13</b>
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	The subject was not reported on by the last inspection.

### Main strengths

- Students attain above-average standards because of interesting teaching of a well-structured, challenging course
- Students enjoy their work, particularly the case-study approach followed in Year 13
- The department provides students with very good guidance on how to do well

### Commentary

196. Students have done very well in psychology examinations for the last three years, and it is a very popular subject. National figures for psychology results at AS and A level are not available, and so it is not possible to compare the school's results with those nationally. However, the school's data shows that students have done better in psychology than in their other subjects, and that the great majority of students gain results which are higher than predicted from their overall Year 11 GCSE grades. In 2004, over half the students gained A or B grades.
197. The students' attainment on entry to the course, based on their overall GCSE grades at the end of Year 11, is below average. The standards the Year 13 students are attaining are above those expected for this stage of the course. This indicates that their achievement during the course is very good, particularly as they have not studied this subject for GCSE. Students

develop a secure understanding of basic psychological concepts during Year 12. By Year 13, they are able to apply this knowledge well in exploring real-life problems. For example, students were invited to design the internal space of the new school library, to meet criteria including the efficient use of space and its suitability for student learning. They had to base and justify their plan on psychological research they had read, and were considering factors such as personal space, the colour scheme and light.

198. Teachers have very good expertise in the subject, and set challenging work. In the most successful lessons, creative teaching produced enthusiastic and lively responses from the students, whose skills in independent learning were strongly fostered. They worked very well in pairs and groups, justifying their proposals while listening with respect to others' ideas. A weakness in teaching is that sometimes the students are given too few opportunities to answer questions and think for themselves. The teaching has been enhanced by adopting the approach of the National Strategy for students in Years 7 to 9, but is also very well focused on preparing students for examination requirements. Very clear guidance is provided for students. For example, information on how to structure essays helps them to develop their literacy skills as well as extending their psychological understanding. As a result, students are enabled to out-perform the predictions made on the basis of their attainment on entry to the course.
199. The psychology course has been designed very well. Its popularity with students is indicated by the low drop-out rate at the end of Year 12. Key knowledge and skills are taught thoroughly in Year 12, and are then used in a series of investigations in Year 13. The students are very motivated by this approach. Throughout the course, students are encouraged to make links to their learning in other subjects, including art and design, citizenship, design technology and ICT. The expectations for the department are very clear, based on a thorough audit carried out recently, and its improvement is being managed purposefully. The last inspection report did not comment on psychology, although it was being taught then, and so an evaluation of improvement since 1999 is not possible. However, the indications of the increasing popularity of the subject and examination success suggest good improvement.

### **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

200. **Product design** was sampled. A level results were well above average in 2003, but less good in 2004. In the Year 12 lesson observed, students made very good gains in learning how to analyse a product. They were given very good guidance, closely linked to the examination requirements, with strong encouragement to think for themselves. The quality of their portfolio work was of very good quality for this stage of the course.

### **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus was on art and design (including photography). **Music** was sampled. Too few students take this subject for their results to be validly compared to those nationally. In the lesson observed, standards were very high and students' learning was excellent because of the inspirational way the topic of jazz form was taught.

#### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is excellent.

	<b>Years 12 and 13</b>
Standards	Very high
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent
Leadership	Excellent

Management	Excellent
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths

- Students are inspired by their teacher's expertise, enthusiasm and love of the subject.
- The excellent teaching leads to high quality work and excellent achievement
- Students manage their time and become independent learners because they receive very good feedback on their progress

### Commentary

201. The school enters students for examinations in art and design, and photography. The combined results were well above the national average in 2003, at both AS and A level. In 2004, results show a similar pattern of high performance, with approximately four-fifths of the students gaining grades A or B. Those who choose to study photography begin the course with little or no previous knowledge of the subject, and they do very well indeed. Art and design and photography are very popular courses, and in recent years a high proportion of students have gone on to degree courses in art and design.
202. In the work seen, there are clear signs of the very high standards and excellent achievement of previous years being maintained. Preparatory and 'final' pieces of work show maturity, imagination and creativity. Students make telling connections between the artists' work they are studying and their own work. Their work journals contain detailed explanations, ideas and thought processes and are very high quality. Very high standards are underpinned by advanced technical skill used to great effect throughout all aspects of students' studies in art and photography. For example there is a growing awareness about how the creative potential of computers can be exploited. A weaker aspect of this otherwise very positive picture is that some students do not speak as confidently and authoritatively about photographers, artists and designers' work as they write about it.
203. Teaching and learning are excellent. All the teachers are practising artists and their work, enthusiasm and love of the subject are inspirational. Their very high expectations and command of the subject make them excellent role models. Students and staff share a clear understanding of examination requirements. Because students receive very good feedback on their work and progress, they are able to continue working to the same high standard independently of lessons. As many students are planning to continue their studies in higher education courses, this prepares them very well for higher education.
204. Leadership and management are outstanding. The course planning and analysis of examination results is very thorough and leads to very effective action. Sixth form classes are taught by two teachers, an arrangement that works extremely effectively because of outstanding teamwork and effective systems of record keeping. The range and breadth of the curriculum are excellent, and it is enriched by many extra-curricular visits to local studios, national galleries and trips abroad. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

### Physical education

Provision in physical education is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge and expertise is having a positive impact on students' achievement and this is leading to rising standards
- Students' positive approach to learning is helping to improve standards
- Student analysis through discussion and debate is not fully developed
- Evaluative leadership is helping to improve provision

### Commentary

205. In 2003, A-level physical education results were below the national average overall, although results for boys were average. Students who took A-level in 2003 started the course with below-average attainment. However, all students achieved a pass and four-fifths improved on their target by about one grade. Small numbers took the course in 2002, making comparisons between years unreliable. A-level and AS results were better in 2004 than the previous year.
206. The subject is increasingly popular, and the current Year 12 students have a generally higher level of attainment at the start of the course than was the case in previous years. These students have made a good start to the course. They have a general understanding of energy systems and how these are used during specific exercise, although they are not yet sufficiently analytical in measuring aerobic and anaerobic levels. They are beginning to understand specific muscle names and their functions within the major muscle groups. They understand characteristics associated with the development of popular recreation and the reasons for its decline.
207. Teachers encourage students to think for themselves, and use their subject knowledge well to challenge students to be analytical. This was most evident in Year 12. Teachers give good demonstrations both in practical lessons and in classroom-based lessons. Although students are always involved in analytical discussions in lessons, insufficient attention is sometimes paid to extend the understanding of higher-attaining students. Lessons are planned within a suitable scheme of work. Students have excellent attitudes to work. They are fully engaged in lessons and are eager to improve their learning by seeking additional research opportunities.
208. Good leadership and management have contributed to the subject becoming more popular. The department regularly evaluates its performance and is forward thinking, always looking at ways to expand the sixth form provision, for example by the addition of dance. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their specialist areas. The department makes good provision for students who are not taking physical education as an examination subject, including through extra-curricular opportunities for sport.

### BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies but **economics** was also sampled. AS results were above average in 2003, whereas A-level results were below average. In the Year 13 lesson observed, teaching and learning were very good and standards were above course expectations.

#### Business studies

Provision in business studied is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since last inspection	Not applicable

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are very good, and so students do very well
- Courses are very well managed, with good links with real businesses
- Opportunities for students to use ICT in some lessons are insufficient

## **Commentary**

209. In 2003, Alevel results were well above the national average, with over half the students gaining A and B grades. Results in 2004 were similarly high. Students taking the AVCE double award in 2003 attained above-average results; this trend was maintained for students completing in 2004. AS students' results at grades A to E were similar to the national average in 2003, while in 2004 they went up considerably as over half gained A or B grades. Although intermediate students attained below-average grades in 2003, students did better in 2004 as more higher (merit) grades were gained. Students on all courses achieve well when their results are related to their GCSE standards on entry. Most students did better than they were predicted to, and about a quarter achieved much more highly than expected.
210. The standards attained by students on advanced courses exceed national expectations, due to the effectiveness of the teaching. Year 12 AS-level students showed above-average numeracy skills when calculating retained profits for a music studio, and those in Year 13 (A2) understood financial ratios and their limitations well. Year 13 AVCE students showed a good grasp of the power and functions of trade unions. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The lessons observed had very good features, including teachers' expertise and high expectations, and their very good relationships with students. Teachers' assessment of students' progress on all courses is very good and so students know exactly how to improve.
211. Teachers' very good care and guidance for students from all ethnic groups reflects the very good quality of leadership and management within the department. The experienced, committed staff team use rigorous systems to track students' progress and encourage both independent learning and self-assessment by students. This helps them develop very good attitudes to learning and the subject. Good links have been established with local businesses. GNVQ students make particularly good use of local placements, which are not yet used for advanced level business students. Improvement since the last inspection is not possible to evaluate as the subject was not inspected. The department has good capacity to improve further by increasing the availability and use of ICT in A-level lessons.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

212. **Health and social care** was sampled. This is a vocational course (VCE). Results in 2003 were above average, but in 2004 the results fell. This reflects the varying nature of the groups taking the course. In the Year 12 lesson observed, students worked on understanding demographic trends. They were given very good opportunities to take responsibility for their work, which they did very confidently and well. Very good use was made of the Internet to research information.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

213. **General studies** was sampled. AS-level results were average in 2003. In both the Year 12 lessons observed, the teaching was very good. Students were engaged in thoughtful, focused discussion, explaining their views and perceptions of the local area.
214. **Key skills** was also sampled. The Year 12 class focused on punctuation, to develop their written communication skills. The teacher presented the information clearly, but the students were rather hesitant in responding.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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



