

INSPECTION REPORT

Cheshunt School

Cheshunt

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117596

Headteacher: Mr Stephen Drake

Lead inspector: George Knights

Dates of inspection: 1st to 5th November 2004

Inspection number: 268773

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	992
School address:	College Road Cheshunt Waltham Cross Hertfordshire
Postcode:	EN8 9LY
Telephone number:	01992 624375
Fax number:	01992 643411
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Cherry QC
Date of previous inspection:	October1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Cheshunt School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18 years at Cheshunt in Hertfordshire. It has 992 pupils on roll, including 96 students in the sixth form, making it broadly average in size. The school is part of the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership, a partnership of three schools which work together to provide sixth-form education in the local area. Students of all abilities attend the school and the overall attainment of students on entry is below average. The school has, since 2003, been designated as a specialist technology college. It has the Sportsmark award, is a TTA Partnership Promotion School and has Investor in People status. Many students come from a less prosperous area in the Lea Valley and the number of students eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has become much more popular in the local community in recent years; it has almost doubled in size since the previous inspection and is now over-subscribed. Most pupils transfer to the school from seven main partner primary schools, of which five are specialist status partners, though pupils come from over 30 schools. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is, at 13 per cent, higher than in most schools and the number for whom English is not their mother tongue is also above average. The number on the school's register of special educational needs is above the national average, though the number with statements of special educational need is below average. The number of pupils who enter or leave during the school year is below average. Until recently, only small numbers of pupils have remained in full-time education at the end of Year 11, but now more than half are doing so, with an increased number entering the school's sixth form. Around a third of students enter higher education on leaving the sixth form.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3268	George Knights	Lead inspector	
13214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector	
6044	Roger Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics
21971	John Glennon	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
32878	Steven Goldsmith	Team inspector	Science; physics
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs
33368	Val Greatrex	Team inspector	Design and technology Work-related learning
4317	Ken Madrell	Team inspector	Geography
4223	Garth Collard	Team inspector	History
32173	Barbara Brown	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music Citizenship
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	Physical education Business studies
10807	Paul Quest	Team inspector	Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

ALTECQ INSPECTIONS LTD
 102 Bath Road
 Cheltenham
 Gloucestershire
 GL53 7JX

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Cheshunt School is a **good** and rapidly improving school. Although standards are below average, they are improving faster than nationally and pupils achieve well. The personal development of pupils is good, as are their attitudes to study. Teaching and learning are good, and pupils receive good care, support and guidance. Leadership and management are very good and the school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher has been inspirational in shaping a school to which parents want to send their children;
- Results are improving at a faster rate than nationally and are higher than in similar schools;
- Learning has improved markedly because teachers structure lessons carefully and make them interesting;
- The evaluation of the work of departments is more rigorous than the evaluation of the work of tutors;
- Arrangements for the management, teaching and learning of citizenship and personal and social education are not good enough;
- Teachers make it clear to pupils why it is important to behave well and to get on with one another;
- Very good links with other schools and the community enhance the reputation of the school and extend the range of what is offered to pupils;
- Very good induction programmes help students settle quickly into school or sixth-form life.

Overall, progress since the previous inspection has been **very good**. Standards have risen and teaching and learning are much improved. Leadership and management of the school are much more effective than at the time of the previous inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. Overall, these results were better than in similar schools and represent good achievement for the pupils concerned. In GCSE examinations, results were well below average, but above average when compared with similar schools. These results also represent good achievement for the pupils concerned. In both national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations, results were much better than in the previous year. In 2004 there was a further big improvement in test results at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations, maintaining an impressive pattern of improvement at a faster rate than nationally in recent years. Results for the very small number of students taking GCE examinations in the sixth form in 2003 were well below average, but these students did as well as expected, given their attainment at the start of their sixth-form courses.

Year 11 and 13 results

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained at the end of Year 9.

Pupils currently in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well and those in Year 9 are working at average standards. This good achievement is the outcome of good teaching which enables pupils to learn well. Pupils who are currently in Years 10 and 11 joined the school with lower overall attainment than younger pupils. Although they are working at below average standards, they have also benefited from good teaching and are achieving well. Teachers pay careful attention to the needs of individual pupils. Consequently, those with special educational needs achieve well and the school ensures that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as other pupils.

Because teachers make lessons interesting and challenging, pupils enjoy their work. Pupils have **good attitudes** to study and they behave well. The school makes a good contribution to pupils' personal, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development. Attendance to school is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided in the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are good, with very good or excellent teaching in around a quarter of lessons. Teaching is much improved, with teachers structuring lessons well and matching tasks to the needs of all pupils. Just over five per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory, much of this occurring in citizenship and personal and social education lessons.

The curriculum is much improved and provides a good range of courses for pupils to study. Only in some of the provision for religious education and citizenship is provision not good enough. The curriculum is enhanced with a good programme of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. The school provides good care, support and guidance for pupils and sixth-form students, though there is some variation in the quality of the work of form tutors. Very good links with other schools and colleges help broaden the range of what the school can offer and also help ensure good transfer of pupils from their primary schools. Other links with the community are very good and the school works hard to maintain good links with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The headteacher's contribution to leading the school forward has been outstanding. A very firm foundation has been laid upon which to build further improvement. The clarity of vision and sense of purpose in the school, shared by staff and governors, are very good. Senior members of staff provide very good role-models for other colleagues and for pupils as they work together to improve the school still further. Central to the improvement that has taken place has been very good strategic planning, coupled with rigorous self-evaluation of teachers' work that has led to much improved teaching. Governance of the school is good. Governors have a very good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are supportively critical of the professionals working in the school. They manage resources very well. Governors fulfil all their statutory responsibilities other than in ensuring a daily act of collective worship, in providing enough time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and for reporting to parents on pupils' achievement in citizenship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils and parents think this is a good school and they are delighted with the many improvements that have been made over recent years. The local reputation of the school has improved significantly so that it is now over-subscribed. Minor concerns of parents related to pupils' behaviour, the quality of information provided to parents about their children's progress and the arrangements for setting homework are, in the view of inspectors, unfounded. The overwhelming majority of pupils are well behaved and the information for parents is good. Homework is used well to support learning and this is reflected in the significant improvement in the standard of pupils' work.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop more rigour in the evaluation of the work of tutor teams;
- Improve the management, teaching and learning of citizenship and personal and social education;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide for all pupils and students to take part in a daily act of collective worship;
- Increase the time for religious education in Years 10 and 11;
- Report to parents on standards in citizenship.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Sixth form education is satisfactory. Standards are well below average and students' achievement is satisfactory. The school makes a good contribution to students' personal development and students' attitudes are good. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are now good overall, with very good teaching in around a quarter of lessons. The curriculum now meets the needs of students well following the establishment of the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and improving and the sixth form is now cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leaders and managers of the newly established partnership are building a good platform for further improvement;
- Induction arrangements for students are very good and contribute to the students' sense of pride in belonging to the sixth form;
- Teaching is more varied in quality than in the main school, but students do not always take enough responsibility for their learning;
- Strategies for evaluation of aspects of sixth-form provision are not as well developed as those in the main school.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is good . Standards are at the national average. Teaching is good and students in Year 12, where teaching groups are larger, achieve well. In Year 13, where there are very few students, they achieve satisfactorily.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is satisfactory and improving. Standards have been well below average, but are rising to an average level. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Science	Provision in physics is unsatisfactory . AS and A-level standards are well below the national average. Students in Year 12 do not realise their full potential due to unsatisfactory teaching.
Information and communication technology	Provision in information and communication technology is good . Standards in lessons are in line with expectations, representing good achievement due to the expert knowledge of teachers and the very good attitudes of the students towards independent learning. The school has a strong commitment to raising ICT skills for all students through an innovative choice of courses.
Humanities	Provision in geography is satisfactory . Standards are well below average, but the achievement of students who study the course is satisfactory. Good leadership and teaching enable students to learn well.
Business	Provision in business education is good . Attainment and achievement on the AVCE course is above the national average, with teachers providing good individual support for students. Students have a positive approach to the subject and work very well outside of lessons. There is no dedicated business area in the school.

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 provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth-form students is **good**. Students are given good advice about courses to study in the sixth form and the induction they receive into sixth-form life is very good. Teachers monitor students' progress well and provide good guidance on how

students can improve their work. Students are also given good guidance on the range of education or employment options at the end of sixth-form study.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are **good** and improving as arrangements for the new partnership bed down. Staff and governors have a clear idea about how they see the sixth form developing. Work to evaluate the work of the sixth form remains to be developed to the point where it is as good as in the main school.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being in the sixth form and they believe the school is very well run. They particularly appreciate their teachers' expertise and the quality and accessibility of their advice and guidance. The pre-inspection questionnaire raised issues in a number of areas, but students did not support these concerns during discussions. Students feel the school is very receptive to their views and that they are acted upon wherever possible. They enjoy taking responsibility and are fully involved in the life of the main school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Main school

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were **well below average**. In the same year, results in GCSE examinations were **well below average**. Pupils currently in the school are working at **below average** standards and are achieving **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results have been improving at a faster rate than nationally in recent years, both in Year 9 tests and in GCSE examinations.
- The school met challenging targets in both Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations in 2004.
- Good attention is paid to ensuring that pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils.
- Younger pupils achieve particularly well in physical education.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship and, for pupils in Years 10 and 11, in resistant materials and religious education.

Commentary

1. The attainment of pupils entering the school is below average, but is improving each year as the school becomes more popular. Whilst the attainment of pupils currently in Year 7 is just below average, pupils who are currently in Year 11 joined the school with much lower attainment. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below average, but provisional results for 2004 were much better than this, with science results being average and mathematics results being below average¹. Results in these tests have been improving at a faster rate than nationally over the past five years. In 2003, results were above the average for similar schools². There was some variation between subjects in 2003, with science results being below average and English and mathematics results well below average. Details of test results are given in the table below.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.9 (31.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.4 (32.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	32.2 (32.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 182 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Students currently in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well. This is because a great deal of work has been done in the school to improve teaching and learning. Teachers are aware of the needs of individual pupils in their classes and thus plan work accordingly. Pupils in Year 9 are working at average standards in English, mathematics and science and this represents good progress since joining the school. Pupils are working at above average standards and achieving very well in physical education. They are achieving well in all other subjects except design and technology, geography and citizenship. In geography, pupils are now learning well under the guidance of a new team of teachers, but made less progress last year and have some catching up to do. In design and technology, the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, whilst in citizenship achievement is unsatisfactory because of inconsistencies in the teaching of the subject.

¹ National results for 2004 in English were not available when this report was published.

² These are schools whose pupils performed similarly when they were in Year 6 three years previously.

3. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well below average, but were above average compared with similar schools. Results in GCSE examinations have been improving faster than nationally over the past five years. This pattern of improvement was maintained in 2004, when GCSE results were markedly better than in the previous year. The school enters a higher proportion of its pupils for five or more GCSE examinations than in most schools and, impressively, the proportion gaining five or more grades G or better is well above average for similar schools. These results reflect well on the pupils concerned and are the outcome of steadily improving teaching throughout the school. Full details of GCSE results are set out in the table below.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003³

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	28 (30)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	85 (87)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	26.5 (27.1)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 116 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Results vary from subject to subject, but the school's rigorous analysis of the causes of this variation leads to action being taken to bring about improvement in those subjects where it is needed. This has been a significant factor in bringing about overall improvement in results in recent years. All teachers have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve pupils' attainment and they work very hard.
5. The work of pupils currently in Year 11 is below average overall, but represents good achievement, given their starting points when joining the school. Students are achieving well in English, mathematics and science. Their work is of average standards in English and science and below average in mathematics. Elsewhere in the curriculum, pupils are working at average standards and achieving well in music and physical education. They achieve well, though standards are below average, in information and communication technology, history and modern foreign languages. Standards are also below average in business studies and geography but, in these subjects, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In art and design, pupils have a great deal of catching up to do. Good teaching is helping pupils to learn well but their achievement is, so far, only satisfactory and standards are well below average. Standards are also below average in religious education in Years 10 and 11. Here, achievement is unsatisfactory because not enough time is allocated to the course to enable pupils to make good progress. Standards are below average in design and technology and achievement is satisfactory overall, though unsatisfactory in the resistant materials aspect of the subject.
6. Good attention has been paid to the development of pupils' numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum. Hence, standards are average, especially among younger pupils, representing good achievement. A range of interesting and challenging initiatives has supported the good development of these skills. Pupils' ability to apply their knowledge of information and communication technology in other subjects is also satisfactory.
7. In recent years, a great deal has been done to identify the needs of each pupil and to monitor their progress. As a result, teachers have good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individuals. They are thus able to match tasks and activities to meet the needs of each pupil. This enables pupils with special educational needs to achieve well and make good progress in their learning. It also ensures that pupils who are either gifted or talented are also challenged and are able to meet their potential. The school systematically monitors the work of all pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and has clear evidence that there is no under-

³ 2003 is the most recent year for which validated national examination data is available.

achievement by any group. Particularly good work has been undertaken in the past two years to improve the learning of a very small group of Turkish pupils, previously identified as under-achieving, and they are now making similar progress to others.

8. The school sets itself challenging targets, as part of an overall drive to improve standards. Targets for tests at the end of Year 9 were met in 2004 and similarly challenging targets, based on the prior attainment of the pupils concerned, have been set for 2005. In GCSE examinations, the school met its overall target in 2004, though it narrowly missed the target for the number of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades. The targets for 2005 reflect the growing aspiration for further improvement in academic standards in the school.

Sixth form

Results in the sixth form are **well below average**. The achievement of students currently in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students gain results in GCE A-level courses that match expectations.
- Students achieve well in business education and information and communication technology.

Commentary

9. Students entering the sixth form do so with well below average attainment. Results in A-level examinations in recent years have been well below average but, because of the small numbers of students involved, comparisons with national results are unreliable. However, students have generally achieved the results expected of them. Indeed, in 2002 and 2003, results were better than expected, though a small number of students did not gain the expected results in 2004.

Standards in GCE A/AS and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003⁴

	School results	National results
Percentage entries gaining A - E grades	62.2 (71.6)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage entries gaining A - B grades	5.4 (15.6)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	150.0 (159.0)	252.8 (263.3)

There were 14 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

10. This year, the sixth form is much larger, with many more students starting sixth-form courses in Year 12 than previously. They, and the small number of students in Year 13, are working at well below average standards and their overall achievement is satisfactory. In the six subjects that were the focus of this inspection⁵, standards are above average in business education and are average in information and communication technology (ICT). In both these subjects, students are achieving well because sixth-form teaching is good in business education and very good in ICT. Standards are below average in English and well below average in mathematics, physics and geography. In these subjects, however, students' achievement is satisfactory.
11. Following the recent establishment of the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership, good procedures are being put into place to monitor the progress of individual students and to set them targets based on reliable information. This work is, however, at an early stage of development and teachers currently do not have the necessary support to set detailed targets for individuals or for sixth-form performance as a whole. Until now, the small numbers of students involved has meant that teachers have been able to track students' progress

⁴ 2003 is the most recent year for which validated national examination data is available.

⁵ The six subjects were English, mathematics, physics, information and communication technology, geography and business education. Within the sixth form partnership arrangement, all of these subjects are taught on the Cheshunt School site.

informally. With the much larger numbers of students now entering the sixth form, the support of detailed and reliable information is essential in order for teachers to provide adequately for the needs of each individual.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Main school

Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are **good**. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **good**. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the majority of pupils willingly comply.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and work hard.
- Procedures to promote attendance are good, but some lessons do not start on time because pupils arrive late.
- Pupils become mature, sensible and responsible young people.

Commentary

12. The headteacher is spearheading the drive to improve pupils' behaviour and the revised procedures are proving to be very effective. Teachers' expectations of behaviour are now much more consistent and pupils know exactly what they should, and should not, do. Pupils' behaviour has improved since the previous inspection and pupils say the school is much calmer than it used to be. Working relationships are good and the number of fixed-period exclusions has almost halved, compared to the same period last year. Although a few pupils are reluctant to learn, teachers usually manage their behaviour well.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	722	85	5
White – Irish	7	0	0
White – any other White background	73	9	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	11	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	13	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	18	12 ⁶	1
Black or Black British – African	10	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	136	0	0

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

⁶ Eleven of these 12 fixed-term exclusions, and the one permanent exclusion, involved only three pupils.

13. Pupils have been involved with the recent revision of the school's behaviour management systems and they speak highly of the constructive way in which their views were taken into account. They are confident that the school is a safe community in which most pupils behave well. Procedures for managing bullying or racism are good and teachers constantly encourage pupils to tell them of any such incidents.
14. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and wear their uniform with pride. They speak highly of their teachers and are keen to be associated with what is, in their opinion, the best school in the area. Teachers' interesting and stimulating lessons inspire their pupils to have positive attitudes to school and their learning. Pupils are conscientious and try hard to produce their best possible work. They enjoy taking part in the activities provided and their outgoing and confident approach makes a significant contribution to the school's lively and vibrant atmosphere. Pupils with special educational needs, including those who are gifted and talented, have similarly positive attitudes to school. They work well together and are very willing to help each other.
15. The previous inspection found shortcomings with pupils' attendance and punctuality. The school has worked hard over the past 18 months to improve pupils' attendance and this hard work has led to improvements. Members of staff monitor the attendance of particular groups or individuals closely. Although there was a small improvement last year, attendance remains below the national average. This is largely because a small number of pupils have very poor attendance and their absences lower the overall school average. The school is trying to re-integrate these pupils and several are attending the 'Learning Zone'⁷ on a full- or part-time basis as a means of supporting their attendance. Placing a small number on link courses with the local college of further education has also improved attendance for those pupils involved. Although most of the pupils arrive at school on time, a small number of lessons do not start promptly because pupils dawdle as they move around school. This reduces the time that is left and limits the learning that can take place.

Attendance

Attendance in the year 2002-2003⁸ (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.6	School data :	1.8
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

16. Provision for pupils' spiritual development was a relative weakness at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' spiritual awareness has since improved and is now good. Assemblies provide opportunities for reflection and the majority of pupils willingly share their thoughts and feelings in lessons and other activities. In English and religious education lessons, for instance, pupils are encouraged to reflect on issues in their own lives and within their family. Pupils' moral, social and cultural awareness is also good. Many older pupils help their younger schoolmates if they are having difficulty with their mathematics or reading, thus gaining a sense of responsibility for others. In lessons, pupils work confidently in pairs and groups and contribute well to class discussions in many subjects. Pupils' studies in a wide range of subjects also help them to develop a good understanding of the traditions and values of other faiths.

⁷ The Learning Zone is a dedicated area where pupils experiencing learning or social difficulties are supported. This support extends beyond lessons – the zone provides an 'out of hours' learning area for a large number of pupils.

⁸ This is the most recent year for which national comparative data is available.

Sixth form

Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are **good**. Their attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are committed to their studies and work hard.
- Students willingly accept responsibilities and are extensively involved in the rest of the school.
- Good relationships help to create a positive learning environment.

Commentary

17. Sixth-form students are well motivated in their studies and eager to learn. They are enormously proud of the way the school has improved over the past few years and an increasing proportion of those in Year 11 are choosing to stay on for sixth form. The school has been a driving force behind the setting up of the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership. This initiative is already bringing enormous benefits. Both parents and students are very positive about the partnership. Students are keen to make the most of the experiences available and they act as very good ambassadors for the sixth form and for their school. Students get on well with each other and like and respect their teachers. Students are very positive about being members of both the school community and the wider sixth-form partnership.
18. Sixth-form students interact well with the rest of the school and take responsibility. This helps them to grow into mature young adults. For example, two students attend meetings of the full governing body and also attend the school council. Many students and prefects also supervise younger pupils during break and lunchtime and help during physical education lessons and extra-curricular club activities. They also help in the library, act as guides during open evenings and mentor younger pupils. These activities are successful in helping students learn how to relate to others and to take responsibility.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Main school

The quality of education provided in the main school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. The curriculum is **good**, as are opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school places a high priority on improving teaching and learning.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge in most lessons to plan activities that interest and motivate pupils.
- Marking and assessment are thorough, but in a number of subjects pupils do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
- There are weaknesses in the teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship.

Commentary

19. The development of teaching and learning is an important focus for the school. Most of the recent whole-school training that has taken place aims to improve learning for every pupil. All the issues relating to the quality of teaching and learning identified at the previous inspection have been dealt with well. As a result, teaching has improved considerably with an increase in the proportion of good or better teaching and a reduction in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 134 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1)	29 (22)	51 (38)	45 (33)	8 (6)	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. The figures include 31 lessons, which were observed in the sixth form.

20. A universally good feature of teaching in the school is the effective planning of lessons, which have clear learning objectives and teaching strategies that meet the needs of all learners, including those with special educational needs. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language also receive good support where needed and learn at the same rate as other pupils. Teachers understand how pupils learn. Hence they use imaginative methods to make lessons interesting and keep pupils working at or near their capacity. In a very small number of lessons, especially in citizenship and personal, social and health education, teaching is unsatisfactory. The weaknesses in these lessons relate to poor planning and a lack of structure and challenge, which results in pupils becoming bored and their learning is unsatisfactory.
21. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are good. Pupils work well in pairs and small groups, displaying good attitudes and behaviour when doing so. Homework is set regularly and is marked carefully. Tasks set either build on work done in class or require pupils to research information prior to their next lesson. As a result they come to lessons prepared to contribute and ready to learn.
22. The marking and assessment of pupils' work are thorough for most subjects, but teachers do not always make sure pupils know how to improve. For example, the newly implemented systems in art and design, design and technology and modern foreign languages do not yet give the depth and detail of how to improve that pupils receive in other subjects. The assessment of work during physical education lessons is a model of good practice, as pupils are clear about how to improve and reach higher standards. Pupils who have special educational needs benefit from lessons that are planned effectively. This is because their teachers and support staff know their pupils well and use assessment procedures carefully in their planning. Individual educational plans are good. Targets are based on good assessment and are regularly reviewed by teachers, support staff, parents and pupils. This means that gains in learning can be reflected in new targets for these pupils.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**, as is the range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Staffing, accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum meets the needs and abilities of all pupils well.
- A good range of vocational subjects is provided in Years 10 to 11.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented is good.
- Some of the provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

23. The curriculum is much better than at the time of the previous inspection when it was criticised for lacking breadth for older pupils. The curriculum now offers more subjects, including a good range of vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 caters well for the needs of all pupils, whilst pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to select from a wide programme of subjects. Hence they are able to follow courses that are well matched to their needs and abilities. Those, for instance, who do not take a modern foreign language follow a vocational course in the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship or an applied GCSE in manufacturing. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved its

provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 by introducing a GCSE short course for all pupils. This goes a long way to meeting requirements, but not enough time is allocated for these older pupils to cover all aspects of the locally Agreed Syllabus.

24. The curriculum caters well for both the most and least able pupils. Able scientists are, for example, able to study three separate sciences, whilst able mathematicians take an additional course in statistics. Throughout the school, those pupils with more pronounced special educational needs and those who have social, emotional and behavioural needs are very well supported through the specialist provision the school makes within its' 'learning zone'. Other pupils with special educational needs are supported well in their lessons so that they are able to benefit from the wide curriculum available.
25. The school has developed a good course in personal, social and health education, covering all the required elements, including sex and drugs education and careers education and guidance. However, the teaching of this course is inconsistent and hence not all pupils learn as much as they should. Similarly, good work to introduce a programme of citizenship education has been compromised by inconsistent teaching, again meaning that not all pupils follow the course successfully.
26. Provision for pupils outside the school day is good, with good take-up by pupils of a range of activities that complement the curriculum. There are regular homework and revision clubs and a 'Mathematics Challenge' where Year 11 pupils help those in Year 7. A timetabled enrichment lesson is also provided for all pupils in Year 7. The school runs over 50 different trips each year. Participation in sport is very good, and the school has earned the Sportsmark award. Participation in the arts is good. Drama is popular and pupils' performances in productions have won local acclaim.
27. The school has enough specialist staff to teach the curriculum. The redevelopment and refurbishment of the main teaching block has had a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and classroom atmosphere. Facilities and resources for sport are good. A lack of enough computers in music limits what pupils are able to do. Gaining specialist technology college status has enabled various improvements around the school, such as the purchase of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing equipment for the technology department.

Sixth Form

The quality of education provided in the sixth form is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. The curriculum is **good**, as are opportunities for enrichment.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. The assessment of students' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in lessons where teaching is well organised, but on occasions they are not involved enough in their learning.
- Assessment is used constructively to guide students and help them to think for themselves.

Commentary

28. The school has recently begun to focus more closely on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form, building on the successful work undertaken to bring about improvements in Years 7 to 11. Teaching is thus improving well and is building on the improvements in main-school teaching. More than half the sixth-form teaching seen during the inspection was good or better and this represents a significant improvement on when the school was last inspected.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	8	9	11	3	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. Percentages are not given because of the small number of lessons observed.

29. The best lessons are carefully planned and structured, with teachers using their very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm to provide work that motivates and challenges students. Good use is made of probing questions so that students learn to think for themselves and are guided towards learning independently.
30. Not all lessons reflect these good elements. At times, weak planning, combined with a lack of knowledge of their subject, for example in physics, results in dull teaching. Here, students become passive and unresponsive. They are allowed to give monosyllabic answers to questions. They are not enthused or able to contribute enough in lessons when teachers talk too much and lessons lack pace and vibrancy. Further, students in these lessons do not learn how to manage their own learning.
31. A good feature of sixth-form lessons is the quality of assessment of students' learning. Work is marked carefully and constructively, giving students regular, helpful feedback. For example, in English, each piece of work is commented upon in great detail and this enables students to develop their critical and analytical skills.

Curriculum

Curriculum provision in the sixth form is **good**. There is a **good** range of enrichment activities. Staffing, accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new partnership enables students to access a wider range of academic and vocational subjects and courses.
- The enrichment programme is varied and matches students' needs and interests.

Commentary

32. The school has recently become a member of the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership, a consortium of three neighbouring schools, in order to offer a more coherent programme of vocational and academic courses. Already this has extended and enhanced sixth-form provision and good plans are in place to extend further what is offered. The school now offers a wide range of academic courses for the more able students wishing to join the sixth form and also provides a good range of vocational courses. This means that the needs of all students who wish to continue their education at school can be met. One immediate effect has been a significant increase in the number of students staying on in the sixth form.
33. The sixth-form curriculum is enhanced by the provision, in Year 12, of a vocational enrichment programme with visiting speakers. All students follow a course in religious education. Students also take part in the Young Enterprise Scheme. Students make good use of the supervised private study periods and many study for the optional key skills qualifications and follow a careers studies programme. A programme of college and work placements has a very good impact on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance.
34. The wide range of extra-curricular activities offered includes sports fixtures, music, drama, information and communication technology clubs and also a wide choice of educational visits. No visits or speakers are offered to enhance the course in business studies, however.

35. The establishment of the partnership has improved the overall staffing of the sixth form, with subject specialists in all subjects. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory for sixth-form work. The library is well run, but the lack of relevant books makes it difficult to build on department plans to develop more independent learning in the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. The school provides pupils with **good** support, advice and guidance and involves them **well** in its work and development. Steps taken to involve pupils in school life are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good induction procedures are effective in integrating pupils into the life and work of the school.
- The academic monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress play a strong part in improving the achievement of pupils.
- Existing procedures to assess the quality of pupils' targets are underdeveloped.
- The Learning Zone provides good support for pupils who need extra time or guidance.
- In Year 9, some pupils receive good additional support and guidance through the Learning Challenge course.

Commentary

36. Procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. This is a caring school where tutors and heads of year know pupils well and hence recognise their needs. Pupils are positive about the school because they feel well supported and cared for. They are confident that the school helps to build their self-esteem and develop their potential. Bullying is not an issue because incidents are usually minor and dealt with very effectively. The heads of year work closely with tutors, the special educational needs co-ordinator and parents to ensure that all pupils who are having difficulties with work, behaviour or of a more personal nature are supported, cared for and helped.
37. The school has a designated area known as the Learning Zone that supports pupils well. Pupils are confident there is an adult to turn to for good support, and they value the school nurse and newly appointed learning mentor. The formal policies and practices relating to child protection and to health and safety are rigorous and carried out well. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. Administration of medicines follows clear procedures and there are accurate records of first aid. Internet access policies are in place.
38. Teachers know and respect pupils and respond well to their personal and academic needs. A well-developed whole-school system traces pupils' progress in every subject throughout their time in school. It is effective in identifying those who are underachieving and steps are taken to support pupils in the subjects that need improvement. There is a need to strengthen its quality assurance procedures to ensure the quality of targets and pupils' understanding of them. New management arrangements are being implemented to address this, but it is too early in the current target-setting cycle to show improvement. Some underachieving pupils in Year 9 benefit from the Learning Challenge, a course aimed to support their personal organisation and learning. Some vulnerable pupils in Years 9 and 10 also benefit from the Raising Achievement Project and are particularly helped by other pupils acting as learning mentors. These courses are successful in supporting the pupils' personal development.
39. Arrangements for the induction of pupils entering the school in Year 7 are very good. Parents express very positive views about the induction arrangements and pupils justifiably feel they have been well supported in their new school.
40. The work of tutors varies considerably in its effectiveness, especially in tutor periods and in citizenship and personal, social and health education lessons. This work is not monitored as

well as subject teaching, but the need to do so is recognised as a priority by senior managers in the school.

41. A good range of activities involves pupils in the work of the school. Pupils are becoming more involved with the self-assessment of their work, leading to a better understanding of what they need to do to improve. The school council is an effective forum for pupils to discuss school improvements. Mentoring by pupils is well developed and pupils in Years 10 and 11 provide good support for younger pupils in Years 7 to 9.

Sixth form

The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth-form students is **good**. The school seeks and acts on the views of –these students **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of academic monitoring to support students is good.
- Induction arrangements for students are very good and contribute to the students' sense of pride in belonging to the sixth form.

Commentary

42. As in the main school, there are good procedures for child protection and the formal policies and practices relating to health and safety are rigorous and carried out well.
43. A good system for the monitoring and tracking of students' progress builds on the good practice in the main school. The head of the sixth form leads his team of tutors well. Tutors know their students and give them good information about their progress. They conduct regular tutorials with each student to monitor the progress made in reaching targets. Students respond well to this monitoring and appreciate the support of their tutors.
44. Students are given valuable information on sixth-form courses when making choices in Year 11. Induction arrangements are very good. In the summer term of Year 11, all students follow a week-long induction course. They take part in a range of worthwhile activities, including sample lessons and courses in study skills. A very good feature of this course is team-building. The induction programme involves visits to each of the schools in the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership and a social visit with students from the other schools. Students speak highly of this programme and how it has helped them with the demands of sixth-form study.
45. A flexible daily tutorial programme addresses the individual needs of students effectively. The school makes a strong contribution to students' personal development, which is viewed as being as important as their academic results. Good guidance is given to both those students intending to enter higher education and those who plan to enter the world of work on leaving the school.
46. The involvement of students in the work and development of the school is good. Sixth-form students play an important role as prefects and as mentors to younger pupils. This makes a good contribution to their personal development. Through the school council they have an effective forum for expressing their views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Participation in the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership provides students with a good range of courses and qualifications.
- Constructive links with other schools and the community support pupils' personal development very effectively.
- Parents provide good support for their children's learning.
- Parents are well informed about school life, but annual reports do not include all the information they should.
- Sixth-form students are very active within the local community.
- The school makes good use of its links with further and higher education.

Commentary

47. This school's status as a specialist technology college creates many opportunities to engage and interest pupils, parents and the wider community. For example, partner primary schools receive specialist equipment and teachers are pleased to share their expertise in subjects such as science, mathematics and design and technology. Pupils in Year 6 also attend literacy or numeracy summer schools and participate in the annual sports festival. These activities help incoming pupils to become more familiar with the school and help to raise standards at the start of Year 7. This school has been instrumental in setting up the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership. Participation in this post-16 consortium is resulting in an increase in the number of courses available and around half the students are taking at least one of their courses at a different school within the partnership.
48. Parents strongly support the work of the school, are delighted with its recent improvement and indicate that there is now little they would like to change. The Friends' Association raises significant sums of money that are used to provide additional resources and learning opportunities. In addition, parents help to organise information meetings, which provide guidance on how parents can support their children at home. Local athletics clubs, a pharmaceutical firm and the Borough of Broxbourne Leisure Services sponsor various sporting activities and these add colour and interest to everyday school life.
49. A small number of parents expressed concern about the information provided about their children's progress. Inspectors agree that pupils' annual reports do not include all the information they should, but judge that parents are well informed in other respects. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept very well informed of their children's progress and personal development.
50. As part of the Millennium Volunteer scheme, students work in several primary schools and local residential homes for the elderly. In addition, students undertaking the Sports Leader Awards help in several contributing primary schools and sometimes assist during lessons when members of staff are absent. These activities provide valuable practical support for the schools involved, contribute to the students' coursework and extend their development as responsible citizens.
51. Links with the University of Hertfordshire are good and students attend the annual 'Aim Higher' day. In addition, visiting speakers inform students about higher education and advise on how to spend their gap year. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 also attend vocational courses at Hertford Regional College.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Main school

Leadership and management of the school are very good. Leadership is **very good**, with **outstanding** leadership by the headteacher. Management of the school is **very good** and governance of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good improvement in leadership and management in recent years has been central to overall school improvement.
- Rigorous self-evaluation of teachers' work has led to a marked improvement in teaching and learning.
- The self-evaluation of the work of tutors is not well developed.
- The contribution made to the professional development of all staff is very good.

Commentary

52. Over the past five years the school has improved dramatically. It has become much more popular in the local community and, as a result, the number of pupils has almost doubled. Standards have risen faster than nationally and pupils are now achieving well. Relationships throughout the school are good and the school makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. This situation, which is markedly better than at the time of the previous inspection, has come about because there is now clear vision for the future and a strong sense of purpose in the school.
53. The major reason for this improvement is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. Teachers, support staff, pupils, parents and governors are all very clear that his role in moving the school forward has been crucial. Because of this, all members of the school community are pulling together to ensure that the momentum for improvement is maintained. There is now a genuine pride in being part of a dynamic school community.
54. The headteacher has been ably supported by the governing body and by his senior colleagues as together they have brought about the dramatic changes in the school. Members of the senior management team are very good role-models for both colleagues and pupils, both in their commitment to providing a better education for all pupils and in the way they undertake their duties. Staff and governors have developed a coherent and forward-looking plan for improvement in the school and this gives a clear strategic direction for all that happens. The main priority has been to improve the quality of students' learning through improved teaching, and the school has been very successful in achieving this aim. This has brought about related improvements, particularly in the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Detailed plans for improvement at whole-school level provide an effective framework for developments in all areas of the school and this has, hitherto, been most successful in improving the work of subject teachers.
55. In line with its aims, the school attends well to the needs of all pupils. It monitors the progress of pupils well and ensures that it meets its commitment to equality of opportunity. Careful attention is paid, for example, to ensuring that pupils make good decisions about the courses they choose to study in Years 10 and 11. The range of courses has been extended, following the previous inspection, to meet the needs of all pupils. Curriculum leadership is thus good. Only in ensuring consistency of provision in citizenship education and in allocating enough time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 has this leadership not been fully effective.
56. A major factor in school improvement has been the implementation of a rigorous programme of self-evaluation, particularly relating to the priority of improving teaching and learning. A great strength of this aspect of management has been the very good support that senior managers have given to heads of subjects, particularly in helping them to deal with the outcomes of the programme of review and evaluation. This has helped to improve teaching and learning by enabling teachers to build on strengths and deal with aspects of teachers'

work requiring improvement. It has also been very valuable in helping new heads of subjects to settle quickly and to develop strategies for improving work in their areas of responsibility. Only in design and technology has this not yet been fully successful.

57. Whilst priority has been given to improving the work of subject teachers, relatively less attention has been given to the work of tutors. There is currently no rigorous programme of review and evaluation of the effectiveness of teachers in this role and hence this feature of the school's work is not as strong. The school recognises that more work now needs to be done to further improve the work of teachers in their tutor roles.
58. Throughout the past five years, governors have played a significant part in bringing about improvement in the school. They have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and are fully aware of the areas requiring further improvement. They play a full part in drawing up the plan for improvement, known in the school as the Raising Achievement Plan. They also carefully monitor progress toward achieving the objectives of the plan. They hold teachers to account for standards and progress being made. Governors have carefully overseen the many improvements that have taken place, but they have not ensured that all pupils and students are able to take part in a daily act of collective worship and they have not provided enough time for an adequate study of religious education by all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
59. Senior managers and the governors ensure that teachers have the resources they need and manage resources well. Careful management of resources has meant that the school has managed to enhance its curriculum and other services to pupils and students whilst meeting unexpected expenditure. The school was, for example, able to cope with the demands on the budget made by the need to enhance school security in 2002-2003 and to return to a balanced budget in the following year. Recent refurbishment of large parts of the school has resulted in much more attractive classrooms, corridors and toilets, which, in turn, has improved staff and pupil morale. This is just a further example of good management of available resources. The school has a strong and effective commitment to applying the principles of best value.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,101,497	Balance from previous year	-50,214
Total expenditure	3,852,880	Balance carried forward to the next	198 403 ⁹
Expenditure per pupil	3,960		

60. A strong commitment to the professional development of all staff is reflected in the school's Investor In People status. Very good links are established between the school's priorities for improvement, individual staff needs as identified through performance management, and resources available. Induction arrangements are very good, enabling teachers new to the school or to the profession to settle quickly and to become effective members of the staff team. The school is a very effective host for student teachers in training.

⁹ This figure includes funds to pay for incomplete and on-going projects.

Sixth form

Leadership and management of the sixth form are both **good**. Governance of the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Arrangements for the leadership and management of the sixth form have improved greatly with the formation of the sixth-form partnership.
- The support of senior managers and governors is central to the effectiveness of sixth-form managers.
- Self-evaluation of sixth-form work is a recognised priority for development.

Commentary

61. Until recently, the sixth form has not been a priority as attention has been mainly on improvement in the school as a whole. Recently, however, the establishment of the South Broxbourne Sixth Form Partnership with two other local schools has re-energised work to improve sixth-form provision. This has had the immediate effect of increasing the numbers of students on roll, and the sixth form has become a high priority for development.
62. Both senior managers and governors have worked hard with their colleagues in partner schools to establish an effective framework for joint working and this has seen an improvement in the range of courses on offer to students. An increase in the number and range of courses is a clear indication of the commitment to meeting the needs of all students who wish to remain in full-time school education after Year 11.
63. Both staff and governors share a clear vision for sixth-form growth. Together they have established a new framework for leadership and management of the sixth form. Very good complementary roles have been established between the director of the partnership¹⁰ and the newly appointed head of the sixth form. Very good systems have been put in place to support these managers. There is good recognition of the need to build on the whole school framework of self-review and evaluation in order that the sixth form can grow even stronger.
64. Governors are effective in their leadership of the sixth form. They recognised that the sixth form was, until very recently, not educationally or financially viable and have taken the necessary action to deal with this. Their critical support for the development of the partnership and their work in ensuring that the sixth form is a priority within the school's Raising Achievement Plan has ensured that the sixth form is now cost-effective.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad range of vocational courses is available for pupils.
- The school has made a good start to the development of a work-related education programme.

Commentary

65. The leadership and management of work-related learning are satisfactory. The school is successfully following recently introduced national guidance and thus is meeting requirements.
66. Learning through work is well developed through the range of vocational courses being offered at Years 10 and 11. Although the school has great difficulty finding suitable placements, all Year 11 pupils undertake work experience. The Connexions service supports careers education and guidance in the school well. Pupils' learning about work is enhanced by

¹⁰ This is a joint appointment, working across all three schools.

the provision of days when the curriculum is halted and the time used to teach specific careers modules.

67. The personal and social education course adequately covers careers education and guidance for younger pupils. Years 7 and 8 have components of the course on careers-related topics and Year 9 pupils receive good support and guidance for subject choices in preparation for study in Years 10 and 11.
68. Work-related learning is having a positive impact on pupils' achievements. The work experience programme is very effective and contributes to the pupils' personal development, their understanding of the workplace and their overall achievement.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE improved greatly in 2004.
- Pupils' good attitudes help them to learn well.
- Teachers generally keep pupils interested, but sometimes do not insist enough on the very highest standards of behaviour and work.
- The department focuses strongly on raising standards, but there is some inconsistency between teachers.
- All the weaknesses listed in the previous report have been improved.

Commentary

69. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below the national average. Over the three years up to 2003, results had risen steadily and there was a further very sharp improvement in 2004 as the measures taken to improve the quality of teaching took effect.
70. Standards of work seen in Year 9 reflect the improvement in test results and are at the national average. As pupils have below average attainment when they enter the school in Year 7, this represents good achievement. Most pupils speak confidently and read aloud expressively. Even the least able read well enough to identify key words and phrases in a story. The most able write with imagination and use a fairly wide vocabulary, but the least able make many mistakes in sentence construction, spelling and punctuation.
71. Results in GCSE examinations in both English and English literature in 2003 were significantly below the national average, although both boys and girls did better in English than in other subjects. Girls performed better than boys by about the same amount as in most schools. In 2004, however, results improved markedly, with around half the year group attaining A* to C grades in both subjects. Results in English literature were a little better than those in English.
72. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well and working at average standards. The most able pupils show good understanding of literature and gain from doing challenging work, such as investigating the use of symbolism in *Lord of the Flies*. In their writing they use telling phrases and interesting vocabulary. Less able pupils have a less deep understanding, but follow plot and character in less demanding novels. In their written work, technical skills are low. In some lessons, teachers do not put enough emphasis on raising standards of speech beyond their present average level. In all years, pupils who have special educational needs achieve well because teachers provide work that matches their needs and is stimulating. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as all other pupils.
73. Pupils learn well because teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons well and sometimes imaginatively, using aspects of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy to good effect. Pupils remain focused and interested in their work because teachers set clear objectives and provide a number of tasks all centred on these learning objectives. Consequently, by the end of most lessons they have made good gains in learning. Most lessons are conducted at good pace, but in some instances pupils are given too long to finish a task or the work is too easy. These weaknesses are usually combined with an over-tolerant attitude to behaviour. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are, however, usually good. Homework is set regularly and adds significantly to what pupils have learned in class. Good use is made of computers for word-processing and for research.

74. Assessment procedures are good. Comments on pupils' work are helpful. Pupils have target levels or grades and know the level at which they are working. Their progress is carefully tracked. This enables teachers to ensure that all pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is not an additional language, achieve well. Some teachers, however, do not place enough emphasis on explaining to pupils exactly what they need to do to raise their level or grade.
75. The leadership of the department is very good. Subject leaders focus very closely on raising standards by improving teaching and learning. They are very good role-models for other teachers. Management of the department is good. There is a good development plan and progress towards its targets is reviewed regularly. Teaching is monitored systematically and rigorously. Examination results are thoroughly analysed. The department handbook and schemes of work are of good quality. However, there is some inconsistency among teachers about the way systems are applied. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. In particular, teaching and the leadership of the department are much better, and these improvements have resulted in much higher standards of pupils' work.

Literacy across the curriculum

76. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are average. The whole-school literacy policy has been a focus of in-service training. A school literacy group ensures that subject departments apply the policy well in their own teaching. Consequently, provision for literacy is good. There is notably good practice in information and communication technology and physical education, where the importance of using the correct technical language is emphasised. In history, strong emphasis is placed on raising standards of writing by the provision of writing frames and the use of key words. In most subjects there is scope for further development. For example, in music, teachers are precise about the use of musical language and their marking aims properly at developing literacy skills. However, there is too much reliance on pupils filling in gaps in texts rather than developing ideas in their own words.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The implementation of a new departmental structure is improving achievement.
- Standards are still not high enough, but are improving.
- The quality of teaching challenges most learners to improve their language skills, but expectations are not high enough in some lessons.
- Teachers have a very good command of all three languages, but under-use them in lessons.

Commentary

77. For some years, standards in French, German and Spanish have been below average at the end of Year 9 and well below national averages at GCSE. Pupils are now achieving well in all three languages in all years. Their work is of an average standard at the end of Year 9 and below average in Year 11.
78. This improvement is directly related to the recent reconstruction of the modern foreign languages department. There is now a full complement of specialist teachers, who form a stable team, teaching a consistent programme in all languages. Teaching and learning are good with some weaker elements. Pupils' achievement is supported by teachers' thorough planning and well-structured lessons, which carefully guide learners through an increasingly difficult series of tasks. Teachers have a very good command of their languages, but use too much English in lessons so that classes do not hear enough of the foreign language to fully develop their own pronunciation and usage. Teachers provide very good examples of spoken and written language so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them and how to attempt the task themselves. The level of tasks caters for the needs of learners in general, although more able pupils are not always sufficiently extended.

79. Teachers use their laptops and software well to engage pupils' interest and further develop their language skills, but pupils' own use of computers is underdeveloped. In a small number of lessons, expectations are either unrealistically high or too low. In these same lessons, a lack of challenge and pace slows the development of some pupils' skills. Lessons generally move at a good pace and the provision of a variety of activities ensures that pupils enjoy their language learning. Relationships are good and hence pupils adopt positive attitudes to work.
80. The department is well led and managed by a recently appointed head of department, who has already had a tremendous impact on the performance of the staff team and the improvement in pupils' response and behaviour. There is now a clear vision for the way to improve upon the previous poor provision. Priorities have been identified and the results of the very good first stage of the improvement plan can already be seen. Both teachers' and pupils' needs are clearly met and, as a result, both groups feel well supported and are also committed to improvement. Departmental documentation and systems for the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are as yet not fully developed.
81. Other features of the department's practice include positive enhancement of pupils' literacy skills, and a commitment to teaching the skills involved in language learning as well as the vocabulary and structures. The previous negative foreign language experience of some pupils is taken into account and, as a result, there is a drive to cultivate confidence in self-expression and enjoyment in learning, which is already bearing fruit.
82. The department has experienced many changes and problems since the last inspection, but is now demonstrating good improvement. It is currently poised for and committed to improving standards and better achievement for pupils.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards by the end of Year 9 are very much better than in similar schools.
- Effective teaching throughout the school means that pupils learn successfully and achieve well.
- Progress since the previous inspection has been very good because leadership of the department is very effective.
- The use of computers to enhance mathematics teaching and learning is very good.
- In a few lessons, pupils lack concentration at times and the pace of work drops.

Commentary

83. Pupils' results in the 2004 tests at the end of Year 9 were just below average for all schools. However, their performance compares very favourably with pupils in similar schools. Pupils gained much better results in 2004 than they did in 2003 and previous years. GCSE mathematics results were below average in 2004, but much better than in 2003. The level of work seen in lessons and in pupils' work shows that standards continue to rise. Pupils reach an average standard by the end of Year 9 and are close to the average by the end of Year 11.
84. Pupils achieve well in mathematics throughout their time in school because teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are good or very good. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and plan lessons very conscientiously. Pupils routinely review what they have learnt and therefore develop a more rounded understanding of the new work being presented. In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic, very well organised, and have a very good rapport with pupils. These lessons move at a rapid pace and pupils make significant headway in their knowledge and understanding. The school's specialist technology college provision enables teachers to make very good use of computers to enhance pupils' work in mathematics. Most classes have a fortnightly timetabled lesson in a computer room and pupils benefit significantly because they can work at their own pace. In most lessons, pupils work diligently and join in class discussions productively.

85. Teachers use methods from the national Key Stage 3 Strategy successfully throughout the school to engage pupils' interest and sharpen their thinking. They frequently encourage pupils to display answers on personal whiteboards. This is doubly effective because pupils are fully involved at all times and teachers can quickly spot individual errors. In a few lessons, pupils occasionally behave restlessly and the pace of work is more sluggish. Teaching is conscientious in these cases, but teachers' skill in managing pupils is limited. Pupils with special educational needs acquire new knowledge and skills steadily because there is a strong concentration on basic skills. Teachers often make a point of using and explaining key mathematical words so that pupils understand better and become more confident. Teachers set homework regularly and mark it carefully and this helps to extend pupils' learning.
86. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a positive sense of purpose with very high aspirations aimed at raising pupils' achievement. The department has made very significant curricular innovations to improve learning. It organised and ran a four-day mathematics master class course for gifted and talented Year 9 pupils from three partnership schools. Year 11 pupils regularly help lower-ability Year 7 pupils to improve their competence in mathematics. More able Year 10 pupils are challenged and extended by studying for GCSE statistics. Management is good. The school finds it difficult to recruit and retain good mathematics teachers and there is currently no second in department to take responsibility for key aspects of work. Nevertheless, the curriculum has been successfully reviewed and enhanced. Monitoring of data on pupils' performance in tests and other work is effective. The commitment to staff development is strong. There has been very good progress since the previous inspection because of very effective leadership. Pupils' achievement and standards are very much better because teaching and learning have improved considerably.

Mathematics across the curriculum

87. Pupils' standards in applying mathematics in other subjects are close to average. Teachers use mathematics well to support other subjects. For example, in physical education, pupils develop and apply their knowledge well in aspects such as timing, recording scores and reviewing performance data. In information and communication technology, teachers encourage pupils to calculate mentally and use formulae in spreadsheet work. Senior teachers operate as 'number police' once each term. They challenge pupils to provide examples of numeracy in different subjects, with sweets for those who give successful answers. This raises the profile of the subject successfully. In science, pupils use formulae, collect data and plot graphs competently. In history they calculate unemployment percentages and interpret statistics about hyperinflation in Germany in the 1930s accurately. In geography, pupils interpret grid references and consider cross-sections of rivers. In design and technology they measure and mark out material in work on textiles.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Interesting and well-structured teaching brings about good learning.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching is good.
- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support pupils learning.
- The provision of information by teachers to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work is inconsistent.

Commentary

88. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004¹¹ were average. There has been a sustained improvement in these test results since 2000 at a faster rate than improvement nationally. Science results have been well above average in similar schools since 2002. As pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average, their achievement during Years 7 to

¹¹ Based on provisional 2004 results available at the time of the inspection.

9 is good. This is confirmed by the standards of work seen during the inspection. There is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as the rest of the pupils.

89. GCSE results were well below the national average at the time of the last inspection. There has been a steady improvement in these results since then to the point where, in 2003, they were below the national average. Results in 2004 showed further improvement. The achievement of these pupils was good because their attainment on entry to the school was well below the national average. Pupils' performance in double award science is significantly better than their performance in most of their other GCSE subjects. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate that improvement is continuing and that standards are average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those from ethnic minorities, achieve equally well.
90. Teaching is good. It is well matched to the needs of the pupils, offering realistic challenges which explore and develop pupils' understanding of scientific ideas. Pupils' learning is good. Lessons are well structured and contain activities that make the subject interesting for groups of differing abilities, including those with special educational needs. Teachers make good use of the department's computer suite provided as part of the specialist technology college initiative to support pupils learning. The department has a clear and explicit policy on the assessment of pupils' work. Assessment is well developed, with some teachers using targets and the comments written in pupils' books to help them understand what they need to do to improve their work. However, this practice is inconsistent. Although all teachers mark pupils' work regularly, some of them focus on its accuracy and presentation rather than guiding pupils in how to improve their knowledge and understanding of science.
91. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department gathers a wide range of information in order to monitor the quality of teaching and this has helped bring about improvements. The management of the department is good. The laboratories are stark, but well maintained. The resources for teaching, including the provision of ICT, are good. The specialist technology college initiative has also led to the introduction of a triple award GCSE course that meets the needs of the most able pupils well.
92. The provision of the triple award GCSE course clearly demonstrates the department's commitment to pupils being adequately prepared to study science subjects in the sixth form. The staff handbook provides comprehensive support for newly qualified and inexperienced teachers, and those that are new to the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Previous shortcomings have been rectified and the strengths of the department have been developed further, resulting in the very good improvements in standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New leadership is having a good impact on the provision for pupils' learning.
- Poor assessment procedures in recent years have led to well below average GCSE results.
- An increase in computing facilities is raising ICT achievement across the curriculum.

Commentary

93. In 2004, teachers assessed pupils' work at the end of Year 9 as being average. This represents good achievement for those pupils. Results were well below average in the GCSE course in 2003¹². Pupils in Year 11 are working at below average standards, but are achieving well. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, progress well in lessons. Work is set to extend pupils of all abilities. Sixth-form students volunteer to assist in lessons for Year

¹² At the time of the inspection, 2004 GCSE results in ICT are under appeal so no comment is made about them.

8 pupils, resulting in enhanced progress for all pupils in those lessons. Teachers cater well for pupils who have special educational needs because their particular strengths and weaknesses are taken into account, but there is little additional support in class, particularly for those for whom English is an additional language. Nevertheless, these pupils make similar progress to others because of the good attention paid by teachers to their needs.

94. Teaching is good. Teachers who interact well with their pupils by using stimulating question-and-answer techniques find that the pupils are motivated and want to learn. In Years 10 and 11, some pupils had been disaffected due to the unsatisfactory teaching they had last year. This has been resolved and these pupils are now showing more commitment. Pupils make greater progress when they work independently on computers. The good level of progress in many lessons is the result of the good attitudes of pupils and the good subject knowledge of teachers. There is no discernible difference in achievement between boys and girls. Teachers have established good working relationships with pupils, resulting in increased pupils' confidence and good learning.
95. Teachers are enthusiastic and expect high standards. For the past two years, poor assessment of GCSE coursework led to well below average examination results. However, procedures for coursework assessment have now improved and are used to enhance standards in examination projects. All pupils are aware of their target grades and have the motivation to improve. Homework is used very well to extend learning.
96. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed head of department is rectifying many deficiencies and has the full backing of the headteacher and governors. He has already developed an effective team spirit. He has a clear vision for the future, which is already resulting in good use of new teaching technologies and strategies. He strives for improvement in standards and provision and, through his enthusiasm, is a good role-model for other staff. Pupils' self-evaluation is good, leading to regular development sessions to build teachers' skills and enhance learning for pupils. Recently revised lesson plans in Years 7 to 9 are good and spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' development are covered very well.
97. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Resources for the subject are good and are much better than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers make good use of data projectors, but have yet to develop their skills in the use of interactive whiteboards. Classrooms are equipped with enough modern computers for individual use in the largest classes, and wall displays are bright and aid learning. The technician and the network manager are both competent and highly valued. They are responsive, knowledgeable and ensure that there is a reliable, well-maintained network of computers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

98. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is good. The school endeavours to make full use of the ICT facilities by encouraging pupils to use them in the library, timetabled lessons and homework, and this is raising pupils' ICT skills. ICT resources are very good in the pupil support centre and contribute very much to pupils' learning. ICT is used particularly well in mathematics and science. Art and music have insufficient resources to meet their ICT demands. Students' standards in the application of ICT across the curriculum are satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new leadership of the department is improving teaching and learning.
- The new team of teachers are subject specialists, who use their knowledge well to make learning interesting.
- Standards are below average because pupils have difficulty applying their knowledge.
- Teaching strategies do not always address the needs of all learners.

Commentary

99. In September 2004 a new head of department and team of teachers joined the school. They are already having a good impact on pupils' learning and attitudes to the subject.
100. Standards in the current Year 9 are below average, but are improving. This represents satisfactory achievement for these pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate satisfactory factual knowledge of both human and physical geography. Their ability to apply this knowledge and to explain geographical processes is weaker. They acquire a satisfactory range of map skills.
101. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average, as they had been in similar years. Provisional results for 2004 are similar. These low standards were a result of former weaknesses in teaching and the management of the department, which are now being rectified. Overall, the performance of girls has been better than that of boys because they give more attention to their written work.
102. Standards in the current Year 11 are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement by pupils who opt for geography on both the full and short courses. Pupils have a sound understanding of topics such as rivers and economic geography. They describe physical features and patterns of location well, but experience difficulty with the accurate use of technical language and explaining why things happen.
103. Since the arrival of the new team of teachers at the start of the term, teaching and learning have improved and are now good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, they are enthusiastic and committed, and they use a range of effective approaches in the classroom that pupils respond well to. Pupils are taught in mixed-ability groups and, whilst teachers identify the range of needs of their pupils, they do not always use strategies that meet the needs of all learners equally well. Consequently, pupils do not always make enough progress in lessons. Resources are used effectively to make lessons interesting and to help pupils consolidate what they have learned. However, pupils do not make enough use of maps to support their understanding of place.
104. All members of the department establish high expectations for learning and behaviour and lessons are well structured. Good features in lessons are the imaginative starter activities, good-quality explanations and the use of challenging questions that help pupils to think clearly and to reinforce their learning of the topics being studied. Assessment procedures are good. Pupils' work is marked accurately and pupils are given good guidance on what they need to do to improve. Relationships in the classroom are good and pupils display positive attitudes to their work.
105. The new head of department provides good leadership and management of the subject. Strong departmental teamwork is helping to improve teaching and learning. Teachers are well qualified. Accommodation and learning resources are of good quality and meet the needs of

the curriculum well. Revisions being made to the curriculum are providing better guidance for teachers and more fieldwork for pupils. Topics such as the geography of sport are being successfully introduced and are providing more motivation for boys. Procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the department are good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, but the department is now well placed to improve still further.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the curriculum is knowledgeable and purposeful.
- Teachers encourage pupils to work hard and take pride in their work.
- GCSE results are improving well.
- Assessment is clear and constructive.
- The best teaching actively involves and challenges pupils.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to use computers or to visit historical sites.

Commentary

106. Standards are below average in Year 9, but this represents good achievement in relation to pupils' attainment when entering the school. Standards at GCSE in 2004 were better than those in 2003, when they were well below average, but these results and standards represent good achievement for this group of pupils. Pupils' opinions are valued and positive classroom relationships help to create a good working atmosphere. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls, those who speak English as an additional language, or those with special educational needs.

107. Good teaching is a key factor in raising standards. Most lessons are well planned and teachers build good relationships that encourage pupils to play an active role in their own learning. Sensitive questioning allows pupils of all abilities to play a full part in lessons, and most work is closely matched to individual needs. However, in a few lessons, mostly in Years 7 to 9, some pupils are not challenged enough and teachers rarely require them to work independently. A strong emphasis is placed on improving literacy. The use of guided writing structures and help with specialist vocabulary gives most pupils the confidence and expertise to write more extended pieces of work. Marking and assessment are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Consequently, pupils are aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve.

108. The subject is well led and managed. There is a clear vision for improvement and a strong team spirit. Self-analysis, through close monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' progress, helps improve the work of the department. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not take part in enough organised historical visits. Although subject resources are good, the inadequately stocked library and restricted access to computer facilities limit independent historical research. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, and the department is very well placed to make further progress.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The newly appointed head of department is making a significant impact in improving achievement in religious education.
- Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching time in Years 10 and 11 is too short to cover the course in the required depth.

Commentary

109. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are in line with the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus. Although their background knowledge of the beliefs and customs of a number of religions is limited, pupils are able to reflect on various religious issues in a mature and thoughtful way. Pupils of all abilities in Years 7 to 9 achieve well. The written work they produce, both in class and as homework, is thoughtful and well presented. They take an active role in class discussions and are sensitive to the beliefs and values of others.
110. In 2004, the school entered most pupils for the short course GCSE in religious studies. The results were well below provisional national results. Pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 are working at below average standards and their achievement is satisfactory. Although able to evaluate and reflect upon their own beliefs and values, there is little evidence of them being able to draw on the beliefs and customs of other religions. Pupils' written work is well produced. Pupils do not readily engage in classroom discussions and are reluctant to respond when given challenging tasks.
111. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are very good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, teachers plan lessons well, using their very good knowledge of the subject to engage and motivate pupils. In these lessons, pupils of all abilities are challenged to produce good work and, as a result, are fully involved. Classroom relationships are positively managed. Pupils take part in discussions well and this helps their understanding of the topics being studied. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to bring pace to the lessons. Suitable homework is set and well marked. Assessment is efficiently completed, providing teachers with the information needed to provide pupils with targets and guide them in how to improve their work. In some lessons, particularly with older pupils, activities lack vitality. Pupils are not challenged enough in these lessons and hence are not enthusiastic learners.
112. Since the previous inspection, good steps have been taken to improve the religious education course for pupils in Years 10 and 11. All pupils now follow a GCSE short course and this goes a long way to meeting the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. However, the time allocation is still too short to enable teachers to cover all topics in the depth required by the syllabus. Consequently overall provision in the subject is unsatisfactory and this remains a weakness of whole-school leadership of the subject.
113. Recent improvements in religious education have been good. The newly appointed head of department has a clear vision for the future and has rejuvenated the department. Her leadership of the subject and of her team of teachers is very good. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved significantly, especially in Years 7 to 9. Management within the department is satisfactory and improving.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning vary too much in quality between different aspects of the subject.
- Committed and hardworking teachers create a good working environment for pupils.
- Students achieve better in food and graphics than they do in resistant materials.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have not learnt to work independently.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided and is popular with pupils.

Commentary

114. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average, but are improving. In Years 7, 8, and 9 there are no consistent differences in standards between the different areas of design and technology taught in the school and, in these years, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
115. GCSE results in 2003 were very low compared with results nationally. In 2004, unconfirmed results improved in graphics and food, but were lower than in the previous year in resistant materials. Standards of work for pupils currently in Year 11 are below average, particularly in resistant materials. Some coursework of a better standard is being produced in graphics and food. Achievement is satisfactory in food and graphics in Years 10 and 11 but is unsatisfactory in resistant materials. This is because, in this aspect, teachers' expectations of pupils in their making tasks are not high enough.
116. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but vary considerably across the department. Good teaching occurs in food and textiles, where lessons are well planned and taught by teachers who are enthusiastic about their subject. Occasionally, in graphics lessons, the pace of lessons slows and not enough activities are set to engage pupils. Not enough emphasis is placed on the variety and quality of projects set in resistant materials in Years 10 and 11 and this lowers examination results. There is sometimes a lack of excitement, innovation and challenge in resistant materials lessons, which, together with a low level of teachers' expectations, lowers achievement.
117. Pupils enjoy the subject and relate well to their teachers. Homework is set regularly and helps reinforce and extend class work in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have not learnt to work independently and need to acquire this skill in preparation for coursework. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well in class when challenged sufficiently. Extra-curricular activities, such as a visit to the New Designer Show and entering food competitions, are popular and there is a good take-up by pupils. The school's technology college status has enabled the department to acquire new computer-aided design and manufacturing machinery to enable pupils to fulfil the requirement of the subject and to upgrade equipment in the food classrooms.
118. Leadership is unsatisfactory. There is not a strong vision in the department for collaborative working and for building teamwork. This, together with a lack of self-evaluation, means that the good practice of some teachers in the department is not being shared with others. This is the major reason why there is such variation in the quality of teaching in the department. Management is also unsatisfactory. Little use is made of performance information to help identify aspects of the work of the department that are not as strong as others. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Some new strategies have been implemented, including 'project managers' for GCSE pupils, to improve their planning of design folders and to help pupils keep to time-scales, but these have yet to bring about improvement in standards. Basic technology skills in Years 7 to 9 have improved, as have graphic techniques.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new subject leader has a clear vision and is thus improving provision.
- Pupils enjoy their work in art and design.
- The use that teachers make of the assessment of pupils' work is underdeveloped.
- The use of computers and of assessment is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

119. On entry to the school, pupils' standards in art and design are well below average. Pupils quickly progress and they achieve well so that, by the end of Year 9, their standards are below average. Due to the very limited experiences the pupils have received in the past to help the development of their techniques, standards by the end of Year 11 are well below average, though the achievement of these pupils is satisfactory. In 2003 and 2004, GCSE examination results were very low. Supported by the very recent appointment of a new head of subject, a gradual rise in standards is beginning to take place. Good care is taken to ensure that the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs or for whom English is not their mother tongue, are met and hence all achieve well.
120. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers apply their subject expertise well, particularly in their practical demonstrations of technique for the pupils to use in their work. This, supported by the pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to the subject, ensures that the development of skills and techniques is good. Assessment is satisfactory. Not enough use is made of the assessment of pupils' work to identify the skills that individual pupils need to develop further. Marking is thorough and homework is set well and its completion is tracked.
121. The very good clarity of vision, sense of purpose and the high aspirations by the subject leader, ably supported by his colleagues, are leading to a significant improvement in the leadership and management of the subject. This was previously poor and is now satisfactory. A curriculum outline, with a very good balance between two- and three-dimensional work, has been established, but has not yet been developed into schemes of work. Lesson planning is thorough and takes account of the pupils' needs to develop their practice and technique further.
122. Resources are rapidly improving and are used to good effect as they arrive. Further resources needed have been identified. The use of computers is unsatisfactory due to the lack of resources currently available in the art department. As a result of recent improvements, teaching and learning are better than at the time of the previous inspection. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection with improvements in teaching, learning and achievement.

Music

Provision in music is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because they respond well to teaching that involves pupils well in their learning.
- Clear, dynamic and effective leadership is raising the profile of music.
- Pupils are not involved enough in the assessment of their work.
- There are not enough computers in the department.

Commentary

123. Pupils' standards of work by the end of Year 9 are below average. In 2004, the assessment of pupils' work indicated a difference in the attainment of boys and girls. However, this is not evident in lessons, where boys readily answer questions using musical language correctly. Pupils' musical ability is well below average on entry to the school. Hence, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups, achieve well during Years 7 to 9. Pupils develop rhythmic skills very well and more competent pupils can play different rhythm patterns together in small groups. Achievement is also good for pupils at the end of Year 11. In 2004, almost all pupils attained GCSE A* to C grades. There are no pupils studying music in Year 11, but more pupils than in previous years are studying music in Year 10. Standards of work for these pupils are average.

124. Teaching is good. Pupils achieve well because of consistently good, enthusiastic and challenging teaching, characterised by comprehensive musical knowledge and teachers' high expectations. Teachers are very competent musicians, who are able to demonstrate tasks clearly. Content is relevant to pupils' interests although, at times, those who are less competent need simpler tasks. All pupils enjoy their lessons. Relationships are very good. Pupils are all involved and work hard to support each other through paired and group work. Success in performance considerably raises their self-esteem and confidence. Lesson planning is good, so that musical skills are developed systematically. Pupils are often guided through an activity and expected to use what they have learnt previously in order to increase their understanding and independence. The music rooms significantly boost learning because they have been decorated effectively to celebrate pupils' work and also provide good displays of musical information and multicultural activities. The latter are used to increase pupils' understanding and awareness of music from other countries.
125. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has established a clear sense of direction, consistency of approach and strong teamwork in the department. The attainment of different groups of pupils is monitored carefully, but not all pupils are clear about exactly how to improve their work. The department provides a good musical environment for pupils. Because there are only three computers in the department, not all pupils can use them regularly for composing. There have been several changes in staffing since the previous inspection. Following the appointment of the current staff, improvement has been good. Standards are rising and the quality of teaching has improved. Better teaching and the recent formation of the new ensembles have transformed pupils' interest in and perception of the subject.

Drama

Drama was sampled during the inspection. In 2003, GCSE results were significantly below the national average, but they were better in 2004. Staffing problems in the last year have left some pupils without proper motivation. However, teaching, learning and pupils' achievement are all now satisfactory. Standards are below average.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Very good teaching from expert teachers ensures pupils make progress in lessons and achieve very well over time.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject, behave well and participate enthusiastically in a very good range of extra-curricular clubs and teams.
- Pupils know what level of performance they are working at and what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils taking the GCSE examination did not do as well as expected last year.

Commentary

126. Pupils achieve very well and reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. The most able achieve success at district and county level in a range of sports. Students following the course offered to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well and reach average standards. This represents good progress, given the attainment of these pupils when they joined the school. However, such progress is not the case for pupils taking GCSE courses. Whilst those taking the GCSE short course in 2003 gained commendable results, the return to the full course in 2004 resulted in only a small proportion of pupils gaining at least a C grade. The department has taken the action necessary to improve results, including regular and extensive monitoring of pupils' theory work.

127. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well prepared, carefully structured and enthusiastically taught. They cater well for pupils of all abilities. Pupils evaluate their own and others' performance and use this analysis to improve their skills. They consequently behave well and enjoy the subject. The assessment and evaluation of pupils' progress are models of good practice, with levels of performance clearly understood by pupils and used to guide lesson and curriculum planning. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into lessons and achieve as well as their peers. The department makes very good use of its video camera to review and evaluate student performance in lessons.
128. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department sets high expectations of pupils and has a clear vision for the development of the subject. The department works well with its main partner primary schools, with some primary school pupils having their physical education lessons at Cheshunt School. The curriculum is balanced and stimulating and is enhanced by the extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and teams on offer. The school has gained the Sportsmark award in recognition of its promotion of school sport. Accommodation for physical education is good overall. There are very good grass pitches and a swimming pool, but one small gymnasium and the part-time use of the school hall restricts the scope of what can be offered indoors. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Lessons are good where they are enthusiastically taught using a range of well-prepared and structured activities.
- Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and have an expert grasp of the assessment requirements for the courses.
- Some pupils on the applied business course have a negative attitude to the subject.

Commentary

129. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well below average and pupils who took the course did similarly in 2004. However, these results represent satisfactory achievement for the pupils concerned. In the applied business course, poor attendance and poor attitudes to work resulted in just two of the 24 pupils entered achieving a pass grade in 2004. The department has taken effective steps to prevent a recurrence of this situation, including additional classes, carefully structured assignments and closer monitoring of pupils' work. Students currently following business studies in Years 10 and 11 are working at below average standards. Their achievement is satisfactory.
130. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is most effective when activities are sufficiently varied to engage pupils' interest and when pupils' understanding of key terms is checked. Pupils appreciate the fact that their teachers have a very good understanding of the course specifications and coursework requirements and are thus able to assist them well. Students' work is marked and assessed thoroughly and positive feedback is given on what they need to do to improve. Not enough use is made of computers as an aid to learning in lessons.
131. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A comprehensive departmental handbook provides a good framework for managing and teaching the courses. Subject performance is monitored and evaluated well, although the department's development plan is not as detailed or focused as it should be to move the department on and improve results. Not enough use is made of external speakers or trips to enrich the business experiences of pupils, and business

partnerships have not yet been established. The subject was not reported on in the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Arrangements for the teaching of these subjects in the school are such that some citizenship lessons are taught at specific times in the week, whilst others are closely linked with personal, social and health education lessons. Comments about personal, social and health education are included within the citizenship report.

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Not all teachers make aspects of citizenship clear to pupils.
- The current arrangements for teaching citizenship and personal, social and health education are not good enough.

Commentary

132. By the end of Year 9, pupils achieve broadly average standards. Standards achieved by Year 9 pupils were reported to parents in summer 2004, but parents of pupils in other years did not receive written reports about how well their children were doing. Those reports that were sent did not indicate clearly how well pupils were doing and what they needed to do to improve. Thus, they did not fulfil requirements.
133. There is a comprehensive and detailed scheme of work for personal, social and health education with links to citizenship clearly shown. This has been carefully developed, but procedures to review how teachers use this material are not adequate. In lessons, teachers' interpretation of the centrally undertaken planning is very variable and often shows that they do not understand the main strands of citizenship. Pupils and teachers are confused and do not know which lessons are focused on personal, social and health education topics and which are dealing with topics from the citizenship curriculum. As a result, there is inconsistent interest in the relevance and importance of these subjects by both teachers and pupils.
134. Despite some good lessons being observed, teaching and learning, both in personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons, are unsatisfactory. In too many lessons, poor planning, low expectations and unstructured debate means that pupils become de-motivated and learn very little. In some lessons this is not the case and teaching and learning are good. Careful preparation of these better lessons ensures that there are clear objectives. These lessons enable pupils, through group work and discussions, to express opinions and debate issues in a mature manner. Pupils enjoy these lessons and gain an understanding of the importance of the subject and how it can help to prepare them for later life.
135. Members of the senior management team have shared responsibility for developing the personal and social education and citizenship courses, and are aware of the previous lapses in statutory provision. They are aware that urgent guidance and monitoring is needed so that teachers understand clearly which subject they should be teaching.
136. Some teaching of citizenship is the responsibility of teachers of other subjects. Here, there is some good practice to build on, with the English department making aspects of citizenship very clear in lessons. English teachers assess pieces of work well and pupils know when this is happening. However, this practice does not extend to other subjects, where a citizenship focus is not always made clear to pupils, and as yet there is no method of assessing and reporting pupils' overall achievements and standards in citizenship.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, six 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 2003¹³.

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	3	100	N/A	33.3	N/A	33.3	N/A
Biology	4	50	65.2	25	11.1	20.0	20.6
Chemistry	6	33.3	72.7	0	13.9	11.7	24.1
Drama	3	66.7	86.5	0	19.6	16.7	30.6
English literature	10	70	85.9	0	19.1	17.0	30.2
Geography	5	0	74.3	0	19.8	0.00	26.5
German	2	50	81.5	0	19.3	10.0	28.9
History	4	100	80.7	0	19.5	35.0	28.6
Mathematics	0	0	61.9	0	17.1	0	22.1
Music	3	100	86.5	0	21.4	30.0	30.7
Other languages	5	80	82.6	2	42.9	40.0	36.2
Sociology	3	100	N/A	1	N/A	36.7	N/A
Sports/PE studies	0	0	73.2	0	11.4	0	23.1
Technology	7	42.9	N/A	0	N/A	11.4	N/A

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
Drama	1	0	99.5	0	40.1	0	83.6
English literature	3	100	99.5	0	46.5	53.3	86.5
Design and technology	5	100	97.8	0	35.0	56.0	77.9
Geography	4	25.0	98.7	0	44.5	10.0	84.0
History	4	75.0	99.0	0	44.6	50.0	84.6
Information technology	3	100	95.6	0	24.6	40.0	69.5
Other languages	2	100	96.9	50.0	64.5	100.0	93.8
Business	13	100	65.0	15.4	14.6	72.3	60.1

¹³ 2003 is the most recent year for which validated national data is available.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature was the focus for inspection in this curriculum area.

English literature

Provision in English literature is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership of the department is instrumental in increasing student numbers considerably.
- In 2004, students did not achieve the A-level results expected from their prior attainment.
- Standards in Year 13 are affected adversely by the small size of the group.
- Students gain from the department's emphasis on independent learning.

Commentary

137. The overall achievement of students is satisfactory. In 2003 there was only one entrant for A-level. In 2004, the seven students entered did not reach the standards expected from their GCSE results. The four students in Year 13 are working at below average standards for an A-level course, but are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their previous attainment. There are 42 students in Year 12. They are achieving well and are working at the average standard for the AS level course.
138. Year 13 students show sound ability to analyse structure and character. They understand post-modern techniques. Their arguments are, however, not sophisticated. The small size of the group limits the scope for discussion and students do not learn sufficiently from each other. On the other hand, they value and benefit from the individual attention they receive from teachers. Year 12 students are making good progress in textual analysis.
139. Teaching is good. It is more effective in Year 12, where there are more students to spark discussion with perceptive comments. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that they use to engage students with their enthusiasm. Lessons are planned well, with clear objectives and suitable resources. Very good questioning techniques constantly challenge students to think for themselves. Insistence on students learning independently is a feature of the department and teachers achieve the right balance between giving them sufficient guidance and too much help. In their homework, students are expected to carry out their own research. For this purpose they have very good access to computers, but the stock of suitable books in the library needs to be updated. Work is marked very thoroughly with detailed comments. Thus, students know what to do to improve.
140. The very good leadership of the department ensures that there is a constant drive for all students to reach their potential. This is responsible for the dramatic increase in the numbers of students choosing to follow the course. Management of English in the sixth form is good.

Key skills in literacy

141. There is satisfactory provision for literacy in the sixth form and standards are average. There is a less consistent approach than in the main school because there is no specific policy to direct approaches to literacy in the sixth form. A small number of students follow the key skills course in communication, in which they learn well because of good teaching.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' standards have been well below average, but are rising to an average level.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good so students learn new work logically and coherently.
- There is too little whole-class discussion to enliven lessons and enthuse students.
- The key skills numeracy course is very effective, but caters for too few students.

Commentary

142. Few candidates entered either GCE A-level or AS level mathematics examinations in 2003 or 2004. The three A-level candidates in 2004 obtained pass grades. For students currently studying mathematics in the sixth form, standards are well below average in Year 13, but are average in Year 12. Students achieve satisfactorily because teaching and learning are satisfactory. The Year 13 students started from a low base and have particular weaknesses in basic algebra that slow their progress. Year 12 students began their course with much better GCSE grades and are stronger all round. Students following the further mathematics course in Year 12 are working at an above average level.
143. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students receive a very good grounding in AS level and A-level work because the teacher has a very secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and presents information clearly. Computers are used effectively in topics such as functions and graphs where, for instance, the dynamic nature of such displays enables students to improve their understanding markedly. Although the teacher presents information effectively, there is sometimes too little whole-class discussion to engage students fully. The timetable includes some two-hour sessions that lack the variety of activities to retain students' interest and concentration. In these sessions, the teacher works hardest and the students become merely note-takers. Towards the end of these lessons, the teacher flags and students lose concentration. The small Year 13 class includes students being prepared for both A-level and AS level examinations. This means that one group or the other marks time while a topic is presented to the other group. The teacher is trying hard to ensure that this grouping is working as well as it can.
144. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is a good commitment to raising students' standards and improving the popularity of the subject. The establishment of a separate further mathematics class in Year 12, in conjunction with partnership schools, is a very positive development that is working well. Provision in Year 13 is less successful, but will improve next year. The key skills application of number course in Year 12 is very good, but only provides for a small number of students. There has been satisfactory progress so far since the previous inspection, but the potential for future improvement is much better than at the time of the previous inspection.

Key skills in mathematics

145. Standards overall are below average. The key skills course on the application of number is taught very effectively so that students gain confidence and are encouraged to suggest and discuss mathematical implications in other subjects they are studying. Provision is good in geography, physics and chemistry, and satisfactory in other subjects. In geography, students employ their mathematics well in the study of hydrology and of population. In physics, they make significant use of algebra to help their understanding of the subject. In chemistry, students calculate atomic masses of elements such as lithium. The application of number course highlights aspects of mathematics in different subjects very effectively. It is a very good model for extending cross-curricular mathematics to a wider audience of students.

SCIENCE

The focus for inspection in this curriculum area was physics. Work was also sampled in chemistry and biology. Results in both subjects have been well below the national average since 2002. One lesson of each subject was observed. Standards of work seen were below average in Year 13 biology and above average in Year 12 chemistry. Teaching is very good in biology and good in chemistry. Students' work shows that they achieve well in chemistry and very well in biology.

Physics

Provision in physics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' learning and achievement are unsatisfactory due to inadequate teaching.
- School leaders are taking action to remedy the current deficiencies in this subject.
- The contribution of the subject to students' numeracy skills is good.
- Students complete very few tasks that require them to work independently.

Commentary

146. Standards in AS and A-level examinations have been well below average since 2002. It is not possible to identify any trend in these results because the number of students following the course is very small and varies from year to year. The achievement of students in Year 13, based on their previous GCSE and AS level results, is satisfactory. The achievement of students in Year 12 is unsatisfactory. Their attainment on entry to the sixth form was above average, but standards of work seen were below the national average for AS level.
147. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Of the two lessons observed, one was satisfactory and the other was unsatisfactory. The teachers' knowledge of the subject is satisfactory. Where teaching is unsatisfactory it is dull, fails to interest the students and takes no account of their prior knowledge. Practical work is trivial and does not challenge students or extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject. However, students successfully complete a wide range of numerical and algebraic tasks that develop their numeracy skills well. Some students use computers to complete their homework tasks, but teachers do not use them routinely in their work and exploit their particular advantages to fully support students' learning in physics. Students are provided with a satisfactory range of support materials, which are available on the school's computer network. Students' ability to work independently is underdeveloped. Apart from routine homework tasks, students complete few tasks that enable them to develop the skills of researching, speculating and making links between ideas.
148. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of the science department has a clear understanding of what needs to be improved. Monitoring procedures are well developed and have identified the current inadequacies in how the subject is being taught. This has enabled senior managers in the school to take extensive action to attempt to remedy the current situation and these efforts are continuing. The resources for physics teaching are good. The laboratories are well maintained and the department is well organised with a good range of teaching resources. The subject was not inspected during the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The department offers several different combinations of AVCE, GNVQ Level 2, key skills and technical courses to students in Years 12 and 13. The whole provision was the focus of this inspection.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The wide range of courses available is very popular with students.
- The school has a strong commitment to raising ICT skills for all students.
- The expert knowledge of teachers encourages students to learn with confidence.

Commentary

149. In 2003, standards in A-level examinations were below average, but only a small number of students take the subject. These results represent good achievement for the students concerned. Students acquire good skills, knowledge and understanding in lessons and they work well, both independently and collaboratively, due to good teacher planning. They all work productively and have good attitudes. ICT is proving very popular with students in Year 12 because there is an increased range of vocational, technical and key skills courses available this year.

150. Teaching is very good and thus students learn very well. Teachers interact well with their students by using stimulating question-and-answer techniques and hence the students are motivated and want to learn. Good achievement in many lessons is the result of the very good attitudes of students and the expert subject knowledge of teachers. Teachers have established good working relationships with students, resulting in increased students' confidence. They are enthusiastic, use exciting teaching methods and new technologies, and they expect high standards. They analyse students' progress effectively using good data to inform their students of ways to improve. Students are encouraged to learn independently.

151. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future and has established an effective team spirit. He is enthusiastic, strives for improvements in standards and provision, and is a good role-model for other staff. The school is innovative in introducing technical courses, which raises the profile of its technology status. Self-evaluation is good and leads to regular development sessions to enhance teachers' skills and improve learning for students. Assessment procedures have improved considerably and are now rigorous.

152. Accommodation and resources are good. Teachers make very good use of data projectors and internet video clips. The technician and network manager are competent and highly valued. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, particularly in the stronger co-ordination of the subject and the increased access to computers for all students.

Key skills in information and communication technology

153. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is good. The school sets a high priority for enabling students to build their ICT skills. Students with no ICT qualifications have increased their capability through taking key skills lessons. ICT is used well in mathematics and English. Students do not use ICT enough in physics lessons. They use word processing and a range of other software to produce good presentations.

HUMANITIES

154. The focus in this curriculum area was on geography, but work was also sampled in sociology. In sociology, standards are well below average. Two lessons were observed. Teaching is satisfactory and students' attitudes are positive. However, lessons are too teacher-dominated, depriving students of opportunities to discuss issues and voice their own opinions.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management give clear direction to the subject.
- A new team of enthusiastic specialist teachers share a commitment to improving standards.
- Relationships are good and students display good attitudes to learning.
- Students have difficulty applying their knowledge to examination questions.

Commentary

155. Only small numbers of students study geography in the sixth form. AS and A-level results were well below average in 2003 and provisional results for 2004 were similar. These results represent satisfactory achievement for the students concerned. Standards for students currently in Years 12 and 13 are well below average. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Although they have a satisfactory knowledge of case study material, students have difficulty with applying it to examination questions. Their description of geographical information is far stronger than their ability to interpret and explain it.

156. Teaching and learning are good and are improving. A new team of teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well organised, with a good range of strategies and resources that promote good learning. Teachers give good-quality explanations and provide challenging questions to extend the students' understanding of the subject matter. The marking of students' work is good and students are given good guidance on how to improve. Relationships in lessons are good and students demonstrate good attitudes to learning. Learning is purposeful, but also fun. Students are attentive and work effectively, both independently and collaboratively.

157. The new head of department is providing good leadership and management of geography. Teamwork is a good feature in planning and teaching the AS and A-level courses. This is improving students' learning. Leadership of the curriculum and teaching is good and members of the department provide good role-models for the students. The curriculum is good and is enhanced by a week of residential fieldwork in Devon. This helps the students develop their skills and gives them a better understanding of different environments. Teachers' expertise is well matched to meet the needs of the curriculum. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No subject in this curriculum area was a focus for this inspection. Work was sampled in design and technology. Two lessons were observed and satisfactory teaching led to satisfactory achievement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

No subject in this curriculum area was a focus for this inspection. Work was sampled in art and design and the BTEC performing arts course. In Year 13 A-level art and design, the one student following this course is achieving above average standards. Teaching and learning, supported by the new head of the subject, are good. The student has a high level of self-motivation and very good attitudes to work. There is no student at present studying the course in Year 12. One lesson of the BTEC performing arts course was sampled. This is a new course in the school. Teaching is good. Students' attitudes are good and learning is enhanced by well-chosen theatre visits and workshops.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subject in this curriculum area was a focus for this inspection.

BUSINESS

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Attainment on the AVCE course is above the national average.
- Teachers provide effective individual support for students.
- Teachers assess students' work accurately and have an expert grasp of the assessment requirements for the courses.
- Students have a positive attitude to the subject and work productively outside lessons, particularly in research for their coursework.
- The department's development plan is not as detailed or focused as it should be.

Commentary

158. Students achieve well in this subject. In 2003, results were slightly above the national average with all students gaining a pass grade. Results in 2004 were similar. This again represented good achievement for the students concerned. Students currently studying the subject are achieving well. They have very good research skills, good knowledge and the ability to apply basic business terminology.

159. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is most effective when students work with teachers individually on their coursework. Here, students respond positively to the feedback they receive on what they need to do to improve and gain higher grades. Whilst student-teacher relationships are very good, lessons are less effective where learning outcomes are not made explicit and tangible.

160. As in the main school, leadership and management are satisfactory. The comprehensive departmental handbook provides the framework for managing and teaching the courses well. The analysis of student performance is very well documented and statistical analysis is used well to measure if students are achieving as well as they should. The department's development plan is not as detailed or focused as it should be, particularly in terms of raising student achievement further and in providing a more business-focused environment for students. This latter includes having more relevant business speakers or trips and developing business partnerships. Business courses offered match the abilities and aspirations of students well. The subject was not reported on in the last inspection.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subject in this curriculum area was a focus for this inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No subject in this curriculum area was a focus for this inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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