

INSPECTION REPORT

CORFE HILLS SCHOOL

Broadstone

LEA area: Poole

Unique reference number: 113864

Headteacher: Mr Alan Hinchliffe

Lead inspector: George Knights

Dates of inspection: 27th September to 1st October 2004

Inspection number: 268787

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:	13-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1640
School address:	Higher Blandford Road Broadstone Poole Dorset
Postcode:	BH18 9BG
Telephone number:	01202 656300
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Bob Milne
Date of previous inspection:	1 st to 5 th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Corfe Hills School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 13 to 18 years in Broadstone, Poole. It is much larger than average, having 1,615 students on roll, including 490 in the sixth form. Students of all abilities attend the school and overall attainment of students on entry is above average. The school is designated as a technology college. Students live in an area of favourable socio-economic conditions and the number of students eligible for free school meals is low. The school is popular in the local community and is over-subscribed. Most students transfer to the school from three main partner middle schools. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is low, as is the number for whom English is not their mother tongue. The number on the school's register of special educational needs is below the national average, as is the number with Statements of Special Educational Need. Almost all students remain in full-time education on completion of their compulsory schooling, with well over half continuing in the sixth form. Numbers in the sixth form are enhanced by students transferring into the school at the beginning of Year 12. Around nine-tenths of students enter higher education on completion of their sixth form studies. Student turnover is low.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3268	George Knights	Lead inspector	
32698	Steven Barker	Lay inspector	
31441	Maggie King	Team inspector	Mathematics
3266	Peter Baker	Team inspector	English Drama English as an additional language
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Science Post-16 physics
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32329	Andrew Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design
33368	Val Greatrex	Team inspector	Design and technology
1027	David Potter	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship
4317	Ken Madrell	Team inspector	History Work-related learning
2218	Philip Dahl	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Post-16 French
2032	Chris Polyblank	Team inspector	Music
32724	Geoff Jepson	Team inspector	Physical education
30072	Joe Skivington	Team inspector	Religious education Post-16 sociology Post-16 psychology
5714	Frances Thornton	Team inspector	Post-16 biology Post-16 chemistry
19601	Steve Taylor	Team inspector	Business education
32252	Deborah Wring	Team inspector	Post-16 classical civilization Post-16 health and social care

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Corfe Hills School is a very good school. Standards are above average and students achieve well. The personal development of students is very good and their attitudes to study are excellent. Teaching and learning are good, with many very good features, and the care, support and guidance of students are very good. Leadership and management are very good and the school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The clarity of vision and inspirational leadership of the headteacher, senior staff and governors have created a dynamic, forward-looking and improving school.
- Students' exceptional attitudes to school and learning, together with their outstanding behaviour, make a significant contribution to the school's success.
- In many lessons lively, stimulating and challenging interaction between students and their teachers enriches learning and contributes significantly to very good achievement.
- Day-to-day assessment in lessons is not used consistently to guide students' learning or to inform teachers' planning.
- The school values and acts upon students' views so that the community is characterised by close and trusting relationships between students and staff.
- Teachers do not always stretch and challenge the most able students enough.
- The extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities significantly enhances students' learning and personal development.
- The school's outstanding commitment to charities contributes to very strong links with the wider community and to the students' sense of responsibility.

Overall progress since the previous inspection has been **very good**. GCSE results have improved more than in most schools, remaining consistently well above average, and many other aspects of the work of the school have improved considerably. The school has dealt with the issues identified in the previous inspection report very well.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall standards achieved are good. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science in 2003 were above average and well above the average for similar schools. In 2004, results were better, maintaining a pattern of improvement over several years at a faster rate than nationally. These results represent good achievement for the students concerned. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average, though well below the average for similar schools, and improved still further in 2004. Results in these examinations have also been improving at a faster rate than nationally in recent years and represent good achievement. Sixth-form results were also well above average in 2003 and still better in 2004. Sixth-form students achieve well.

Year 11 and 13 results

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

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

Students currently in Year 9 are working at above average standards and are achieving well at this early stage in the year and are successfully building on their work in partner middle schools. In Years 10 and 11, students are also achieving well because of good, and often very good, teaching. Because teachers pay close attention to individual students' needs, students learn well and make good progress. **Students' attitudes to work are excellent.** Levels of respect between students and their teachers are outstanding and this, coupled with excellent student behaviour, ensures a very rich and purposeful climate for learning. Attendance at school is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided in the school is very good. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, with very good or excellent teaching in two fifths of lessons. Teaching is challenging, interesting and well matched to the needs of students, whatever their background or ability, and thus students learn well. In a small number of lessons, the most able students are not stretched enough and, occasionally, teaching in the main school is unsatisfactory.

The curriculum is varied and designed to meet the needs of students very well. A very good programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, popular with students, enriches the curriculum, with an outstanding contribution to this programme from the arts. Arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of students are very good. Advice and guidance for students in the main school is very good and in the sixth form is excellent. The school has established very good links with other schools and colleges that ensure continuity in students' learning and development. Links with the community are also very good, with an outstanding commitment in the school to support for charities. The school works very closely with parents in the support of students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are very good. The school is led by an outstanding headteacher, whose clarity of vision and sense of purpose have been essential to the improvements taking place in the school. He is ably and enthusiastically supported by his colleagues and by an active governing body. Senior members of staff provide excellent role models for others. Very effective strategic planning is linked to very good and improving arrangements for rigorous self-evaluation of all that happens in the school. The ability of the school to identify both its strengths and what needs to be done to improve further is central to the school's improvement. Governance of the school is excellent. Governors have played a fundamental role in helping shape the direction and vision of the school. They are supportively critical of the school and have an outstanding record in the management of resources. They fulfil all their responsibilities other than in ensuring a daily act of collective worship for all students.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and carers are hugely positive about all aspects of the school's work. They value the strength of the partnership that exists between school and home and the influence that they have in shaping the future direction of the school. They have confidence that the school is well led and managed, they rightly believe that their children are well taught and that the school has high expectations of them. Students are overwhelmingly positive about their school. They value all that it provides for them in terms of academic and personal development and in the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities available to them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- use informal assessment in lessons more consistently to guide students' learning and teachers' planning;
- ensure that all teachers challenge and stretch all students, and especially the most able, in their learning;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- report to parents on students' achievement in citizenship education;

- enable all students to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is very effective. Standards are above average and students achieve well. The school makes an outstanding contribution to students' personal development. Teaching is good, with many very good lessons, and students learn well. The curriculum meets the needs of sixth form students very well. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and the sixth form is very cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Sixth-form students are exceptional role models for others because they willingly accept responsibility and engage fully in the life and work of the school.
- Teaching styles in some lessons restrict students' engagement in, and responsibility for, their own learning.
- The school's advice and guidance for preparing students for higher education and the world of work are excellent.

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 is very good . Results are above average in English literature and average in English language. Provision in French is very good . Learning in both subjects is very good as a result of very good teaching. Excellent teacher/student relationships contribute significantly to learning and achievement.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . Standards are above average and achievement is good. Teaching is good and the subject is very well led.
Science	Provision in physics is good . Standards are above average. Good-quality teaching by experienced teachers enables students to achieve well. Provision in biology is good . Standards are above average and students' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. In chemistry, provision is satisfactory . Standards are improving and are average. Good teaching enables students to learn well.
Information communication and technology	Provision in information and communication technology is good . Examination results are above average due to the expert knowledge of teachers and the very good attitudes of the students towards independent learning.
Humanities	Provision in history is good . Results are above average. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching is very good. Students display very good attitudes to learning. Provision in sociology is very good . Standards are above average because of very good teaching and learning. Students achieve very well. Provision for psychology is satisfactory . Standards are average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving, leading to satisfactory achievement. Provision in classical civilisation is good . Standards were well below

Business	<p>average in 2003, but results improved significantly this year. Teaching is good and students make good progress.</p> <p>Provision in business education is satisfactory. Standards are average. Students' achievement is satisfactory because teaching and learning are satisfactory. Provision in health and social care is very good. Standards are well above average. Teaching and assessment are very good with high expectations of, and very good support for, all students.</p>
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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 advice, guidance and support for sixth-form students is **excellent**. Students are guided very well as they prepare for sixth-form study and their academic and personal development are central to the very strong relationships between teachers and students. Excellent, impartial guidance on further study and career opportunities ensures that students look forward with confidence to the time after they have left school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are **very good**. Staff and governors share a very clear vision for further development of the sixth form. Very good attention is paid to evaluating the work currently going on and this enables detailed planning to build on current strengths.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth-form students, as with those in the main school, are exceptionally positive about the sixth form and all that it provides for them. They believe that they are encouraged to become independent learners and are provided with excellent support, advice and guidance, a view shared by inspectors.

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 **above average**. In the same year, results in GCSE examinations were **well above average**. The achievement of students currently in the school is **good** and their work is **above average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results have improved at a faster rate than nationally in the past five years.
- Effective analysis of results leads to changes in teaching and learning so that any identified weaknesses can be overcome.
- Very good links with partner middle schools contribute well to students' good achievement in Year 9.
- Students achieve particularly well in mathematics and information and communication technology, but achievement is only satisfactory in business education.
- Occasionally, the most able students are not challenged to attain the high standards of which they are capable.

Commentary

1. When students enter the school at the beginning of Year 9, their attainment is above average. They have only nine months in the school before they take national Year 9 tests and during this time they make good progress. As a consequence, they do well in these tests. Results in 2003¹ were above average, having been well above average for the previous three years. They were, however, well above average when compared with similar schools². Despite the slight dip in 2003, results in recent years have been improving at a faster rate than nationally and are better than at the time of the previous inspection. Results for 2004, yet to be validated, indicate that this impressive pattern has been maintained. Results in 2003 varied from subject to subject. They were well above average in mathematics and above average in science. Average results in English were the main reason for the drop in overall results in 2003, but this pattern is not, however, consistent from year to year. 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	33.7 (36.3)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.8 (36.8)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.7 (35.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 374 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. There are two main reasons why students do well in Year 9. Firstly, they settle quickly into their new school and establish good study habits. Secondly, skilled teachers build very effectively on the secure foundations laid by teachers in the partner middle schools. Very good links with these schools mean that Corfe Hills' teachers know about the needs of

¹ 2003 is the most recent year for which validated national and school data is available.

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

students when they arrive and have a clear understanding of what the students have already learnt.

3. Work seen in most Year 9 lessons is above average at this very early point in the school year. Because teachers are already challenging students well in lively, stimulating lessons, students are generally achieving well. Students achieve particularly well in Year 9 and, consequently, reach well above average standards in mathematics, music and information and communication technology. In almost all other subjects standards are above average, but are only average in religious education. In this subject, however, students are achieving well in Year 9.
4. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above average, as they had been in the previous year. Over the five years to 2003, GCSE results improved at a faster rate than nationally and are better than when the school was last inspected. The school was, however, disappointed with 2003 results, which were lower than in the previous year and well below those in similar schools. It thus took decisive action to ensure that the small dip was not repeated. This was effective and results in 2004³ are close to those achieved in 2002. Careful attention has been given to ensuring that all students, and particularly boys, complete the coursework elements of GCSE assessments well. That the school is successful has been borne out by the fact that boys have done relatively better than girls⁴ in GCSE examinations in the past two years. Full details of 2003 results are set out in the table below.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	64 (76)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.1 (41.6)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 371 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. From year to year, results vary from subject to subject. Careful attention is paid to these variations so that, where students do not do as well in a particular subject as they do in others, a rigorous review is undertaken to identify causes. Action is then taken to ensure that work in these subjects improves. This was a significant factor in improvement in the most recent examinations.
6. Students currently studying in Year 11 are roughly half way through their GCSE courses. In English, mathematics, art, drama and music they are achieving very well and are working at well above average standards. In all other subjects except business education they are achieving well. Standards are above average in most of these subjects, though only average in religious education and design and technology. In these two subjects, these lower standards reflect a lower starting point than in other subjects. In business education, teaching is not effective enough to enable students to achieve as well as they should.

³ These results have yet to be validated.

⁴ Overall results show girls gaining slightly better results than boys, but the gap is less than that between boys and girls nationally.

7. Students enter the school with good levels of English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills. They successfully build on these as they study in other subjects so that achievement in all three subjects across the curriculum is good. Particularly impressive is the ability that students have to express themselves and to present their ideas orally. Hence, lively discussion is a feature of lessons in many subjects.
8. Great care is taken to ensure that all students, whatever their prior attainment or background, are able to learn successfully. Results are analysed to ensure that no student, or group of students, is achieving less well than they should be. Teachers have detailed records of the background, attainment and preferred learning styles of each student in their classes and they use this information well to provide lessons that meet students' needs. Hence, all students make similar progress. Students with special educational needs are well catered for and hence achieve well. That almost all students leave the school with five or more GCSE grades of G or better is testimony to this success. Occasionally, the most able students are not challenged enough in lessons for them to do as well as they could. The school is aware of this and is developing good strategies to help teachers support these gifted or talented students more effectively.
9. Almost all of the very few students for whom English is an additional language speak and write fluent English. However, the school is quick to identify those students who do require additional support. In these cases, professional assessments are carried out and additional help is provided⁵ so that these students are able to follow the full curriculum successfully and to achieve well.
10. The school met its targets for Year 9 test results in 2003 and came close to meeting even more challenging targets in 2004. It came very close to meeting challenging targets for GCSE examinations in 2003. Targets for GCSE results in 2004 were not based on reliable information about students' prior attainment, were unrealistic and were not achieved. The school now has very good systems for setting targets that are reliable, being based on students' previous attainment and challenging but achievable. These overall school targets are developed from the targets that individual students are aware of and working hard to achieve. Very good systems are now in place to use targets with individual students to guide them in their studies and are contributing to greater student motivation and to improving performance.

Sixth form

Results in the sixth form are **well above average** and sixth form students achieve **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in A-level examinations are improving steadily.
- Students joining the sixth form from other schools achieve well.
- Students achieve very well in subjects such as English, French, sociology and health and social care, but far less well in chemistry, biology, business education and psychology.

Commentary

11. When students join the sixth form, their overall attainment is above average⁶. Because of the good teaching and support they receive, students make good progress and achieve well. Results in A-level examinations in 2003⁷ were well above average and results in 2004 show a further improvement. Results at A-level are better than when the school was inspected six years ago. Results vary a little from subject to subject, but much of this variation relates to

⁵ The school receives help from the Poole Minority, Ethnic, Traveller Achievement Service, who support these students.

⁶ The ability of students here is compared with that of students nationally joining A-level courses. Although the school sets restrictions on students joining the sixth form, it admits students to courses where it is believed that they can be successful, rather than that they have high GCSE grades. Hence, although the school's GCSE results have been well above average, students with a broad range of attainment start sixth form courses.

⁷ This is the most recent year for which validated A-level results are available.

differences in the prior attainment of students rather than to the quality of provision in those subjects. The school is aware of the fact that, although overall results are impressive, a relatively small proportion of students gain the highest grades. This is partly because students with a wide range of prior attainment are able to follow the courses and partly because, hitherto, teaching methods have not necessarily challenged the most able. This is being dealt with in the school, with teachers working hard to improve their teaching to make sure that the most able sixth-form students are being stretched. Full details of results in 2003 GCE A-level examinations are given in the table below.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage entries gaining A - E grades	90.8 (92.8)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage entries gaining A - B grades	29.4 (32.2)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	291.1 (287.7)	252.8 (263.3)

There were 227 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

12. Students currently in Year 12 are at the beginning of their sixth form study and are already achieving well, as are those in Year 13. This is equally true for students who transferred into the sixth form from Year 11 and for the significant number of students who join the sixth form from other schools in the area. Standards are well above average in English, French and health and social care and students are achieving very well in these subjects. Students are achieving well and working at above average standards in mathematics, physics, information and communication technology, sociology and history. They are achieving well in classical civilisation, but because of weaknesses in their written work are still working at below average standards. Achievement in chemistry and biology are satisfactory and standards are average. In these two subjects students started the course with a wide range of abilities and, whilst some are doing well, others are finding the work very difficult, despite good teaching. Standards are average and attainment is satisfactory in business education and psychology. In these two subjects, teaching is not stimulating or challenging enough to enable students to fulfil their potential.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Main School

The development of students' attitudes and behaviour is **excellent** and the overall contribution made by the school to students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students behave exceptionally well and relate very well to each other and to their teachers.
- Students have outstandingly positive attitudes to all aspects of school life.
- The curriculum and extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities make a very positive contribution to students' moral and social development.

Commentary

13. Students are very enthusiastic about coming to school and this is reflected in the very good attendance figures. Students behave exceptionally well in lessons, around school and within their own community. Teachers are excellent role models, both in their commitment and sense of purpose and in the respect they show students. In turn, students relate very well together and respond very positively to their teachers. As a result, the school is a happy, purposeful and caring place.

Attendance

Attendance in the year 2002-03 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.4	School data:	0.4
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

14. The school's TOPs facility⁸ supports the learning of students who might otherwise become disaffected with school or who, through illness, would be at risk of underachieving. This initiative, the work of the school's special educational needs department and part of the school's policies and practices to meet the needs of all, makes a significant contribution to the desire in all students to learn.
15. The school strives hard to provide a supportive environment and works with a variety of external agencies to develop positive attitudes to school and learning in those who are at risk of disaffection. Its success is demonstrated by the very low exclusion figures.

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	1492	36	1
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	9	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0

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

16. Through a very strong curriculum, a diverse range of enrichment activities and a popular and very well supported programme of extra-curricular activities, the school makes a very good contribution to students' personal development. Particularly, the school makes an excellent

⁸ TOP – Time Out Place. This is a facility that provides support that caters for a wide range of student needs. It enables some students who might not otherwise be able to benefit fully from what the school offers to do so. Hence, it plays a strong part in the school's inclusion strategy.

contribution to students' moral and social development, alongside very good contributions to students' spiritual and cultural development. As a result, students are mature, responsible and caring for others, as exemplified by their outstanding record of support for a wide range of charities.

Sixth Form

Sixth form students' attitudes to school and their behaviour are both **excellent** and the overall contribution made by the school to students' personal development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attitudes to their life in school are mature and respectful.
- Excellent relationships are a strong feature of a very positive ethos for learning.
- Students accept a wide range of responsibilities within the school, which rightly establish their suitability as role models.

Commentary

17. Students' personal development in the sixth form is enhanced by the very good contribution made, through the curriculum and other activities, to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They relate very well to one another and to their teachers and this helps to create a very positive ethos in which students are confident learners.
18. Sixth form students take very great interest in school life and the range of activities provided. They demonstrate great maturity in everything they do within school. They take on a wide range of responsibilities and are actively involved in pastoral care and supporting the learning of younger students. Students show great respect for the whole school community and, hence, are exemplary role models to their fellow students in the main school. Their attendance and punctuality are very good, providing a further indicator of their commitment to study.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Main school

The quality of education provided in the main school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **good**, with many very good lessons. The curriculum is **very good**, as are opportunities for enrichment. The care, support and guidance of students is **very good**, as are links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in the main school are **good**. The assessment of students' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge well to guide their planning.
- Teachers are very good at engaging students in their own learning.
- The informal assessment of students' work in lessons is not as good as other aspects of assessment.

Commentary

19. Teaching and learning are good and have improved since the previous inspection. In over two-fifths of all lessons, teaching and learning are now very good or excellent. Consequently, students achieve well. Improving teaching and learning has been a main feature of the school's plan for improvement in the past year and teachers are now very aware of the

importance of involving students in thinking about how they learn best. Careful attention has also been given to identifying students' preferred learning styles and teachers take this information into account when they plan lessons. The school has also benefited from exploring and using ideas presented in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Details of the teaching observed during the inspection are given in the table below.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 189 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
9 (5)	69 (36)	63 (33)	41 (22)	7 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages. The figures include 72 lessons which were observed in the sixth form.

20. In Years 9 to 11, teaching and learning are very good in English, mathematics, science, art and design, drama and physical education. They are also very good in music for students in Years 10 and 11. Students learn well as a result of good teaching in almost all other subjects. The exception is in business education, where teaching and learning are satisfactory. In this subject, too many lessons are slow moving and do not involve students actively enough in their own learning.
21. Because teachers have a very good grasp of their subjects, they are able to plan lessons that interest and enthuse students. They recognise the importance of ensuring the active participation of students in lessons and this is a particularly strong feature of teaching to students in Year 9. Active involvement results in students being eager to learn and many lessons are characterised by students animatedly engaging in practical and investigative activity. Because students have good speaking skills, their oral contributions to lessons are strong, with many asking challenging questions of their teachers.
22. In a very small number of lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was not satisfactory. This was the result of either the teacher's inexperience or the teacher not teaching their specialist subject and thus not being able to extend students' learning sufficiently. Senior members of staff are guiding and supporting these teachers effectively so that their work can improve.
23. Very good attention is paid to the needs of individual students. Teachers are provided with very detailed information about the previous achievement, strengths and weaknesses of all the students they teach. They use this information very well to ensure that work is matched to the needs of individuals. This is particularly true of those students who have special educational needs. Teachers also work very closely with teaching assistants who provide very good support for students with special educational needs. Occasionally, teachers do not stretch the most able enough and this is an area for further improvement in the school.
24. The marking of students' work is thorough and is undertaken conscientiously. This enables teachers to have a good grasp of how well students are doing. Subject teachers use this information well, alongside test information and targets, to help guide students on what to do to improve their work in each subject. Good plans are in place to extend this guidance, involving tutors in reviewing students' work across all subjects so that patterns in students' performance can be identified. One aspect of assessment requires further improvement. Whilst some teachers are very effective at undertaking informal assessments as lessons progress and modify their work accordingly, others have not developed these skills as successfully. Work on improving this aspect of teachers' work has been identified by the school and is being included in plans for further improvement.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good**, as are arrangements for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities. Staffing, accommodation and resource provision meet the needs of the curriculum **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The innovative curriculum enriches all students' learning.
- There is a diverse range of lunchtime and after-school activities and students' participation in the arts is outstanding.
- The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is very good.
- Good accommodation and resources support the curriculum well.

Commentary

25. The curriculum provides students with a very good programme that matches their needs and aspirations. Since the last inspection the range of courses has been increased and now meets statutory requirements. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now provided across the curriculum and equality of access for all students has improved.
26. The curriculum is particularly strong in physical education and ICT. As a specialist technology college, the overall curricular provision for technology is good. Many innovative developments, such as the TOPs programme, have been implemented to give a greater breadth to the curriculum. Very good links are made with middle schools to determine what the students know and can do before they join the school. This ensures the smooth continuity of education for these students. The curriculum is kept under regular review and governors are very well informed about developments. Very good liaison with local colleges and businesses helps prepare students well for the later stages of education and employment.
27. Personal, social and health education is well established. The quality of the programme is enhanced by the expert knowledge of teachers. A very good ethos is cultivated in this course because of the first-class relationships between adults and students and amongst the students themselves. The course successfully covers material relevant to adolescent students in drug and relationships education, helping them to make informed choices about their own lives.
28. The good and sensitive support given to students with special educational needs ensures that they, like other students, can benefit from every aspect of the curriculum. Courses are carefully adapted to meet the learning requirements of students with a high level of need. This is equally true for the very small number of students from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
29. The school has forged very good links with Connexions, a service working in partnership with the school to provide guidance for students on future pathways. In Year 9, students are given very good advice to help them choose examination courses that are well matched to their interests and aptitudes. Students in Year 11 are provided with very good careers guidance both from the careers service and from experienced teachers. Students gain valuable work-related experience. This is reported in more detail elsewhere in the report.
30. Enrichment activities are very good. Teachers give freely of their time, running clubs for students at break and lunch times and after school and the school offers a homework club, which is very popular. Students successfully use an on-line revision programme and have made considerable improvement as a result. Participation in the arts is an outstanding feature of the school and participation in sport is very good.
31. The match of teaching staff to the requirements of the curriculum is very good. Teachers are experienced and well qualified and to teach their subjects. The provision of resources across the school is good. Considerable improvements have been made to the range and availability of ICT equipment in recent years. Where teachers have digital interactive whiteboards in their classrooms, they use them effectively to improve pace and students' involvement in lessons, but there are still many classrooms without this resource. The accommodation is good. It is

very good for mathematics, design and technology and music, but small classrooms limit the range of activities possible in modern foreign languages. Accommodation and resources to meet the needs of students with special educational needs are very good.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. The school provides students with **very good** support, advice and guidance and involves them **very well** in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The academic monitoring and tracking of students' progress plays a strong part in improving the achievement of students.
- Excellent induction procedures are very effective in integrating students into the life and work of the school.
- The school has a very effective programme for students who need extra time or guidance.
- Guidance on careers and opportunities for further study and careers is well-received by students.

Commentary

32. This is a caring school where tutors and heads of year know students well and hence recognise their needs. The induction arrangements for students from middle schools are so successful that new students are very eager to start. Students are extremely 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 fully. 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 students who are having difficulties with work, behaviour or of a more personal nature are supported, cared for and helped.
33. Teachers know and respect students and respond very well to the students' personal and academic needs. Students themselves are aware that they are known well and they speak very highly of the professionalism of their year teams. A well-developed whole-school system traces students' progress in every subject throughout their time in school. It is effective in identifying those who are underachieving and steps are taken to support students in the subjects that need improvement. The information is stored electronically and available for tutors to prepare for the annual tutorial that takes place with each of their form members. Some vulnerable students benefit from the TOPs provision, reported on elsewhere in this report. This system raises the attainment of those students who, without this support, would not achieve their potential.
34. Child protection procedures are properly carried out. Students are confident that there is an adult to turn to for good support and they value the programme of peer mentors, which they consider to be a strong feature of the school. The formal policies and practices relating to health and safety are rigorous and carried out well. Some recently refurbished toilets show students that their needs are well respected in this area. Health and sex education are taught through the religious, personal and social education programme and the school values the contributions made by the community police on issues like drugs and alcohol.
35. Students put forward their views through their representatives on the school council and this has led to a number of improvements that are valued by students. They receive very good impartial advice on further study and career opportunities, supported by a very effective work experience programme and excellent careers conventions. This is much valued by students.
36. The school celebrates its students' achievements very well. During the inspection week, the school held a whole-school assembly to distribute the £14,000 raised on sponsorship day. There were several moving occasions when the outstanding achievements of individual

students were read out. This preceded the applause that accompanied presentation of cheques to representatives of local, national and international charities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **very good** partnership with parents. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's extensive links with charities, outside agencies and other organisations make a very valuable contribution to students' personal development.
- The school actively involves parents in decision making, which shapes its future direction.
- The school has an impressive network of links with partner schools and further and higher education establishments.

Commentary

37. The school has a hugely impressive record of support for charities. Giving is firmly embedded in the school's culture and this is strongly reflected in the attitudes of students. The entire school community is involved in a diverse range of fundraising activities for the charities that students have chosen to support and this process makes a very significant contribution to the personal development of all students.
38. The annual careers convention brings into school a large number of local and national employers in addition to further and higher education institutions. This makes a significant contribution to the support and guidance that the school provides for all its students and strengthens links with its community. Teachers make very good use of links with the community to enrich and improve students' learning.
39. Parents are regularly consulted on a variety of issues and their views contribute to shaping the school's future direction. Parents are very supportive of the school and all that it offers their children and they work in close partnership with the school to support students' learning. Parents receive regular and high-quality information and are actively encouraged to participate in school activities. Parental concerns are dealt with in a timely and very effective manner and often result in the school reflecting upon and modifying its practices to reflect parents' and carers' views.
40. Close and effective working partnerships with other schools ensure smooth transition into the school from local middle schools. Pastoral care teams get to know all students well during the excellent induction programme, contributing very effectively to the strong relationships that exist amongst students and between students and adults. The close co-operation with partner schools ensures very good curricular progression between Year 8 and Year 9. The school's excellent links with further and higher education institutions make a very significant contribution to the guidance and support that sixth form students receive.

Sixth form

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

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are **good**, with many very good lessons, and the assessment of students' work is also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has improved and is now very good in many subjects.
- Most lessons engage students actively in their learning.
- Assessment is used particularly well in English, mathematics, physics, sociology and health and social care.
- Occasionally, teachers are too dependent on mundane tasks that do not provide challenge for students.

Commentary

41. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good overall and are very good in French, history, information and communication technology, sociology and health and social care. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are better than at the time of the previous inspection, with a higher proportion of lessons that are now very good or excellent. Details of lessons observed during the inspection are given in the table below.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 72 lessons in the sixth form

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactor y	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very poor
4 (5)	30 (42)	20 (28)	18 (25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages.

42. Teachers know their students well and plan lessons to meet their needs. Many sixth form lessons are lively, stimulating and challenging, with students working hard, applying themselves well and taking responsibility for their own learning. Occasionally, lessons in the sixth form are less stimulating and, as a consequence, students do not develop a full range of study skills as effectively as they do elsewhere. In business education and psychology, for instance, students are not encouraged to become active participants. In these subjects, teachers rely too much on presentation of information and the use of written activities, at the expense of group work and discussion. These lessons do not stretch students or extend their learning enough.
43. The assessment of students' work is good, with teachers conscientiously marking and assessing students' work. Care is taken to provide students with clear feedback on how to improve their work. Assessment is a particular strength in the sixth form in English, mathematics, physics, sociology and health and social care. In these subjects, the outcomes of assessment are used particularly well to help teachers match work to students' needs and this contributes to successful teaching and learning.

Curriculum

Curricular provision in the sixth form is **very good**. Sixth form staffing and accommodation are very good and the sixth form is well resourced.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of sixth form courses caters well for students' needs.
- Students participate in many activities and enthusiastically accept responsibilities.

Commentary

44. The school provides a very good range of sixth-form courses that meet the needs and interests of students. Some vocational courses are on offer to students in the sixth form and the school is considering how it can increase the number and variety of these courses.
45. Sixth-form students take full advantage of the extensive programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities available. Provision in the arts is excellent and is very good in sport. These activities considerably enhance learning and encourage students to take on wider school responsibilities. This makes a very strong contribution to students' personal development and helps enhance the positive ethos that exists throughout the school.
46. The school provides a good general studies course within which statutory requirements for religious education are met through the teaching of a religious education module. This enriches students' personal and social development. It also encourages their participation in the school and the wider community by, for example, enabling students to take responsibility as prefects and supporting charity work.
47. Resources in the sixth form are good and teachers are well qualified. Sixth-form students appreciate the very good accommodation provided for them. Independent study is promoted through open access to the well-equipped learning resource centre. Students also value their own recently well-refurbished eating and social area.

Care, guidance and support

The advice, guidance and support provided for sixth form students are **very good**. The extent to which the school seeks and acts on the views of sixth-formers is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of academic monitoring to support students is excellent.
- Guidance on further study and career opportunities is very good.

Commentary

48. The excellent system for the monitoring and tracking of students' progress, building on good practice in the main school, helps ensure that the students achieve their potential. The head of the sixth form leads his team of tutors very well. Tutors know their students and the courses they are studying and are provided with good information about students' progress. They conduct regular tutorials with each student to monitor the progress made in reaching targets. Students respond very well to this monitoring and appreciate the very detailed knowledge that teachers have about them.
49. Students are given very valuable information on sixth form courses when making choices in Year 11 and all who express a desire to join the sixth form are interviewed. This ensures that the vast majority make appropriate choices. This is reflected in the relatively low drop-out rate. Induction arrangements at the start of Year 12 are very good. Students, including those new to the school, say they value this introduction.
50. Tutors give very good guidance on university applications and employment options. This includes advice on available courses and how students should write up their academic achievements. The school makes a very strong contribution to students' personal development, which is viewed as being as important as their academic results. It ensures that those students opting not to go on to university are targeted for an interview with a Connexion's adviser.
51. Through the school council and the team of senior and junior prefects, led by the head boy and head girl, the school hears the students' views and responds to them very well. The head

boy and girl attend meetings of the school's parents' association. They also contribute significantly by speaking in the annual whole-school assembly.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Main school

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership of the school.
- The school has clarity of purpose and fully lives out its aims.
- In all its work, the school is committed to meeting the needs of each student.
- Senior staff are excellent role models for others.
- The school makes an excellent contribution to the professional development of all professionals.
- Financial management is very effective, with a very strong commitment to the application of the principles of best value.

Commentary

52. In all aspects of its work, this is an improving school, dedicated and committed to the academic and personal development of all its students, irrespective of their ability or background. The school is an orderly, civilised, stimulating and exciting community. Its aims eloquently describe what actually happens in the school. It is this living out of its aims that is the most impressive feature of the school and its work.
53. The school is being successful in meeting its aims because it is led by an outstanding headteacher who is ably and energetically supported by talented colleagues and a very committed governing body. Throughout the school, teamwork is an outstanding feature, with teachers, support staff and governors all providing excellent role models for students in the way they relate to one another and in their commitment to students' needs.
54. For many years, the school has had a strong sense of purpose and this has been furthered in the recent past by significant improvements in strategic planning. This was an area of relative weakness at the time of the previous inspection but is now central to the improvements currently taking place. Driven by the two priorities of academic achievement and personal development, the main priority in the school has been improving students' learning. Significant improvements have already taken place and more work is mapped out to improve this aspect further.
55. Strategic planning is directly linked to very good and improving review processes. Governors and staff have a very clear understanding of areas of strength, together with a sharp focus on those aspects of the school's work where further improvement is needed. In this way, plans are put into place that build on secure foundations. An excellent example of this is the school's identification of the need to improve day-to-day assessment to complement the already very good long-term assessment of students' work. This need was picked up through detailed review processes and has become the main priority for the next programme of staff development and training.
56. Management of the school is also very good. A very well developed programme of self-evaluation at whole-school and governor level is being further enhanced by improvements in the review roles and capabilities of middle managers. What is impressive is the commitment, throughout the school, to questioning the effectiveness of what is happening in order to

improve provision still further. It is this that has led to the many improvements described elsewhere in this report.

57. Careful management of finances over many years has enabled the school to improve its accommodation and resources. From its own funds, the school has recently been able to build a teaching block for mathematics that has both improved facilities to that department and has freed up space to improve accommodation in other subjects. Governors and managers are now working together to enhance accommodation in English as a means of further improving standards. This effective use of financial resources exemplifies the overall approach to financial planning and control. Careful planning over an extended period has enabled the school to undertake major repairs and developments whilst maintaining good staff and resource levels to meet the needs of students currently in the school. Throughout all its financial management, the commitment to best value is thus excellent.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£) ⁹	
Total income	6,060,273	Balance from previous year	458,978
Total expenditure	6,219,080	Balance carried forward to the next	300,171
Expenditure per pupil	3,966		

58. The commitment of the school to the professional development of teachers and support staff is outstanding. Together with the focus on students' needs, this makes the school a strong learning community. Professional development of staff is closely linked to priorities within the school's plans for improvement, but very good attention is also paid to ensuring that the needs of individual staff are also identified and met. One very effective way of achieving this has been to make performance management an integral part of planning and development. As in other aspects of its work, careful attention is given to effective funding of training. The school has outstanding arrangements for the induction of teachers new to the school or to the profession and it is an excellent host to student teachers in training.
59. Governors are very involved in all aspects of the school's life and work. Over many years, governors have supported improvements in the school and they have done this in two main ways. They have played a central role in shaping the direction in which the school has moved and have provided excellent critical friendship to professional colleagues. They have an outstanding grasp on both what the school does well and what needs to be improved and so have a strong vision for what they want the school to be. They are self-critical and constantly seek to improve their own effectiveness. They provide excellent support to senior managers, not least by providing a challenging reference point. Governors ensure that the school meets all its statutory responsibilities other than to ensure a daily act of collective worship for all students.

Sixth form

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sixth form is growing in both size and effectiveness because of the clear vision for its development.
- Very good arrangements for review of sixth-form provision have led to the effective identification of priorities for improvement.

Commentary

⁹ These balances carried forward contain funds for projects running over more than one financial year, together with committed funds to building and to finance a rolling programme of major repairs to the school roof.

60. Governors and senior managers have a very clear vision for further development of an already successful sixth form. In particular, they are aware of the need for teachers to be able to meet the particular learning needs of students, most of whom are preparing for higher education. To this end they have recently appointed an additional member of the senior management team who will have responsibility, in conjunction with the effective head of sixth form, for promoting improved learning and teaching for these students.
61. This appointment is a clear example of how the school is successful in identifying areas in need of improvement and taking effective action to deal with them. As in the main school, both strategic planning and review are very good and have played an important part in the sixth form growing in numbers and improving in quality. Within the constraints of course demands, the school encourages all students who could benefit from studying the subjects on offer. For those whose aspirations are for courses not offered by the school, very valuable guidance is provided to enable students to find relevant courses of study elsewhere. In this way, the commitment to meeting the needs of all sixth-form students, irrespective of their needs or background, is excellent.
62. Within their overall leadership of the school, governors play a crucial part in helping shape the direction of the sixth form. They play a full part in strategic developments and supportively challenge members of the senior management team. They manage financial resources very well, ensuring that the sixth form is properly staffed and resourced from the funding allocated for that purpose.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management are developing the curriculum effectively.
- Students in Year 10 follow a good work experience programme that enables them to effectively learn through work placements.
- There is a very good policy for careers education and guidance that supports students well.

Commentary

63. The leadership and management of work-related learning are good. The school is successfully following national guidance and statutory requirements are being met. A full curriculum audit was carried out last year and work-related learning was identified as a priority for development.
64. Learning through work is already firmly established in the school and is being further improved through the addition of the new vocational courses introduced into Year 10. The school has a well-developed programme of work experience for all students in Year 10. Some students in Year 11 have further work experience and this has a good impact on their personal development. The tutorial programme provides very good support and guidance for students undertaking their work placements. This is enhanced through the religious, personal and social education programme where issues of health and safety are addressed. There is a very good programme of college placements for students in Years 10 and 11. In the previous school year about 60 students had such placements, enabling them to undertake vocational courses and skills development not available in school.
65. Learning about work is well developed through a very good policy for careers education and guidance. There is a high quality annual careers convention for all students across Years 9 to 13. New vocational courses in information and communication technology, health and social

care and leisure and tourism have been successfully introduced into Year 10. They are effectively enabling students to learn about work. Activities to support learning about work in other subject areas are at an early stage of identification.

66. Students in Year 10 have a day conference entitled 'It's your Future'. This provides a very good arena for the development of skills and attributes needed in the world of work. Learning for work is also well supported through the tutorial programme and options of the religious, personal and social education and citizenship programmes.
67. Work-related learning is having a positive impact on students' achievements. Analysis of work-experience programmes in Year 10 demonstrates that nearly all students find them to be very worthwhile. The work-experience programme is very effective in contributing to the students' personal development, their understanding of the workplace and their overall achievement. The programme of college courses and enhanced work placements is having a very good impact on students' attitudes, behaviour and attendance. It is too early to evaluate achievement through the new vocational courses but, in work seen, students are progressing well with their learning.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The climate for learning in English is very positive and helps students achieve well above average standards.
- Teachers' assessment of work is thorough and consistent.
- Arrangements for curriculum continuity as students transfer from middle schools are excellent, enabling students to achieve very well.
- Accommodation is barely adequate for larger classes.

Commentary

68. The results of national tests for students in Year 9 were average in 2003¹⁰. GCSE results in English language and English literature were well above average in 2003 and results in 2004 were higher than in the previous year. The performance of girls in GCSE English language and literature exceeded the performance of boys, as it does nationally. Standards in English are well above average and students achieve very well.
69. The teaching of English is very good. Teachers use their specialist knowledge to plan lessons that are well structured and well paced, although occasionally the pace does not give enough time for reflection and consolidation. Teachers use a range of resources, from targeted worksheets to video clips and presentations using information and communication technology, to engage the students' interest. Effective questioning enables teachers to build on students' answers in order to develop their ideas and reinforce learning. The excellent relationships between teachers and students provide a very positive climate for learning.
70. Students achieve very well in lessons. They are attentive, listen carefully to each other, respond well, focus on their work and are very well behaved. Their oral work is very confident and hence they work very productively in pairs and groups. Students are especially good at using research from the Internet and the excellent school library to present their ideas. Students' evaluation of their own work and the work of others is constructive and very perceptive. Students show good understanding of texts and write well and in a variety of styles. Those with special educational needs benefit from expert support in the classroom.
71. Students also achieve very well because of the very good leadership and management of the department. The department has developed comprehensive documentation and schemes of work to support staff and students. Assessment is good across the department and particularly so in Years 10 and 11. Students are, therefore, aware of the progress they are making and of what they need to do to improve. Liaison with the middle schools is excellent, considerably easing students' transition from Year 8 to Year 9. English teachers are well qualified and experienced and are supported effectively by two teaching assistants and an administrative assistant. The department is well resourced. Students benefit from the department's wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
72. Since the last inspection, the department has maintained its record of good results and has significantly improved the quality of teaching. Accommodation for English is barely adequate

¹⁰ Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were not available at the time of the inspection as the papers of all students have been returned for re-marking.

for larger classes. It was considered temporary at the last inspection, but there are now plans for its replacement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

73. Students' literacy standards in other subjects are well above average. A satisfactory literacy strategy, a very comprehensive literacy handbook and a common marking scheme is helping guide the development of literacy skills still further across the curriculum. There is a focus on literacy in tutor periods and students who need extra help with literacy skills are supported by the English department.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve above average standards in French and standards in German and Spanish have improved.
- Students are challenged to produce high quality imaginative and extended work.
- Teachers work very closely with partner middle schools to promote high standards in French.
- There is limited access to computers to underpin and extend language learning and most classrooms have too little space for the full range of language learning activities.

Commentary

74. Standards in French have been improving over the last five years and are above average at both the end of Year 9 and GCSE level. Sound foundations are laid for satisfactory attainment in Spanish and German in Year 9. After one year of learning, students achieve standards comparable to many students who have been learning for three years. Grades in Spanish GCSE, now regularly above the national average, have risen significantly and are now good. Attainment has improved markedly in German. It is now close to the national average.
75. In Year 9, students' achievement in French is good, building on very good foundations laid in the middle schools. Boys and girls not only develop good listening and reading comprehension but also work imaginatively in both writing and speaking. Achievement in Spanish and German is also good, especially given that students only commence this course in Year 9. Students consolidate key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Provision for students with special educational needs is good.
76. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement in French is good, marked by good breadth of topic knowledge, good progress in listening and reading skills and a robust grounding in key aspects of grammar required for examinations. In Spanish and German, students' achievement is good. Gifted and talented students are thoroughly challenged to reach their potential. Two Year 11 students are taking AS level modules alongside their GCSE studies. The school encourages students in Years 10 and 11 to gain language competence as a life skill.
77. In all languages, teaching and learning are good. Concerted teamwork in planning means that teaching enables students to rise to the demands of language learning. Teachers pay close attention to the preferred learning styles of students and modify lesson activities accordingly. They use their subject knowledge well to prepare and teach lessons that challenge students and consistently encourage them to engage in activities. Students respond very well, appreciating the variety of activities and applying themselves productively as they seek to master topics and complete the tasks set.
78. Leadership and management are good. Language teachers have made a sustained and professional effort since the last inspection to improve standards significantly. Students use the information and communication technology available well, but the number of computers is

limited. Classrooms are rather small and limit the scope for regular independent and collaborative activities. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection, when provision in Spanish and German was identified as a significant weakness.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and students achieve very well.
- Standards in using and applying mathematics are lower than in other aspects of mathematics.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work.
- Use of information and communication technology and other practical tools to support learning is inconsistent.
- The department works well as a team, sharing ideas and strategies.

Commentary

79. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average for both boys and girls and very high in comparison with similar schools. There was a slight drop in 2004. In both years, results were better than in English and science. GCSE results in 2003 were also well above average and improved further in 2004. Virtually every student secured a GCSE pass, with almost two-thirds at grades A* to C. These results represent very good achievement, especially for boys.
80. Standards on entry are above average. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are well above average in all years. Students' work covers the range of attainment expected, with many more students working at higher levels and fewer at lower levels than seen nationally. Standards are particularly high in number and in shape and space. They are lower in using and applying mathematics, being above, rather than well above, average. Students learn new skills quickly and develop a secure set of techniques for solving problems. They have very good attitudes to learning which contribute to very good achievement overall. There are no significant differences in achievement for different groups of students or for those with special educational needs.
81. Teaching is good overall, so that students learn well. However, there is variability in the quality of teaching from good to satisfactory. It is very good in Year 9 as a result of more active tasks, structured lessons and good pace. Teachers have in-depth knowledge of their subject and work together to find and share activities that will interest students. They manage students well to secure a purposeful atmosphere. Expectations of behaviour are high and students respond well. In the very good lessons, activities are varied and very well matched to students' needs. Teachers interact well with students and use practical and technical resources to engage them. They expect a lot of students and keep them interested and working well throughout their lessons.
82. Assessment is used to adjust the activities and provide more support or challenge to individuals. In satisfactory lessons, routine practice from textbooks is the main or sole activity, so students lose interest and momentum. Teachers direct too much of the lesson without involving students. As a result, students can follow techniques but they do not always understand the concepts and cannot successfully apply them. Formal assessment through tests and examinations is very good. However, the quality of marking, feedback and informal assessment in lessons is also variable and is satisfactory overall.
83. Students' literacy is developed through the regular definition, use and spelling of technical vocabulary. In better lessons, students are encouraged to reason orally to justify their answers. Their skills are good. Some teachers use computer software to improve

presentation. Information and communication technology is not used consistently to developing students' own skills and students rarely choose to use this as a tool in their work.

84. Leadership is very good and the department is well managed. With support from senior colleagues, the head of department has ensured that there is a clear sense of priorities and a drive for improvement. A strong sense of teamwork engages experienced staff with those newer to the school and encourages the sharing of strategies and ideas. Learning is enhanced by high-quality new accommodation which includes an excellent faculty base. Highly productive links with middle schools help to secure very good achievement in Year 9. The department's work is monitored, leading to an honest assessment of strengths and weaknesses. Systems for monitoring students' progress and constructing schemes of work are effective and focused successfully on raising students' achievement.
85. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The quality of teaching and of learning have both improved significantly and the department is now well placed to secure further improvements in standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

86. Students' mathematical competence is good. A set of numeracy guidelines has recently been established and these are being incorporated into faculty schemes on a rolling basis. There are numeracy themes for each term and students encounter these in tutor sessions as well as in their subjects. Good practice was observed during the inspection in geography and music. However, mathematics is not yet systematically developed across the curriculum and the initiatives are only in Year 9. In some subjects, such as science and technology, opportunities to develop mathematical skills are missed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very effective development of practical skills is helping students achieve very well.
- Very good leadership in the department has led to positive relationships between students and teachers.
- A team of committed and enthusiastic staff with very good subject knowledge has a shared commitment to raising standards.

Commentary

87. Students' Year 9 test results in 2003 were above average and high when compared to other similar schools. This represents good achievement for those students. Results in science are just below those in mathematics and better than in English. The Year 11 GCSE aggregate results for all science courses in 2003 were well above average. The 2004 results show improvements at all levels, largely due to the significant rise in results for those students taking separate physics, chemistry and biology. Based on above average standards on entry to the school, these students achieved well.
88. Students currently in school are working at well above average standards for their respective courses. They build successfully on the work done in their middle schools. Practical skills in particular are being very well developed, with the result that in Years 10 and 11 students are confident in the higher order skills of prediction, analysis and evaluation. Students' books are very well presented, indicating that the department sets high expectations and that the students take pride in their work. The achievement of students is good, rather than very good, because there are occasionally cases where students are not being challenged to achieve their potential.

89. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are well planned by specialist teachers who have very good subject knowledge and teach with conviction and enthusiasm. Teachers use information and communication technology facilities well to enliven lessons. As a result, students are interested and levels of co-operation and behaviour are of a very high standard. This gives rise to a very pleasant teaching atmosphere with good relationships between students and teachers. Assessment of students' work is good and teachers use the outcomes of assessment well, both in their planning and to guide students in how to improve their work.
90. The leadership of this large faculty is very good. The very experienced head of faculty is well supported by subject leaders and other staff who have all contributed to the success of the faculty. The effective work of the laboratory technicians ensures that lessons are well resourced. All the subject leaders provide very good role models. Teachers work as an effective and mutually supportive team and the sharing of good practice is encouraged. A strong emphasis on raising standards is reflected in careful and accurate teaching, focusing on the learning requirements of the courses. Guidelines and policies are clear and practice is monitored effectively. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially in the procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress. Management is good as schemes of work only exist as broad outlines and rely on the experience of teachers and shared lesson plans to meet syllabus requirements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong teacher knowledge and insistence on good behaviour leads to good learning.
- The enthusiastic head of department has brought about very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Students have very good attitudes to work and this helps them to achieve well.
- Although most teaching is good, some teaching is slow and lacks student activity, which leads to less motivated students.

Commentary

91. In 2003, teachers' assessments of students' work at the end of Year 9 were above average. Results were also above average in the GCSE short course in 2003 and were better in 2004. Students in Year 11 are working at above average standards. Students achieve well, but lower ability students and those with special educational needs achieve very well. Arrangements to cater for the students who have special educational needs are very good. Sixth form students volunteer to assist in lessons for Year 9 students, resulting in very high achievement for all students in those lessons. The 'ICT at Work' course gives students with low ability very high achievement through real workplace experiences. Although most lessons include work to extend students of all abilities, students identified as gifted and talented are not helped to excel. There is, however, an AS level course for more able students in Year 10, which enables them to achieve very highly.
92. Teaching is good. Teachers who interact well with their students by using stimulating question-and-answer techniques find that the students are motivated and want to learn. In the very small number of lessons where teaching becomes a monologue, the pace of learning is slower. Students make greater progress when they work independently on computers. The very good level of achievement in many lessons is the result of the very good attitudes of students and the very good subject knowledge of teachers. There is no discernable difference in achievement between boys and girls and there is a marked harmony amongst all students in lessons. Teachers have established good working relationships with students,

resulting in increased student confidence. Teachers are enthusiastic and expect high standards. They analyse students' progress using good informative data. Day-to-day assessment of students' work is used to improve standards in examination projects but is not used extensively elsewhere. Homework is used very well to extend learning.

93. Leadership and management are good. There is an effective team spirit, led by the head of department who has a clear vision for the future resulting in good use of new teaching technologies and strategies. He is enthusiastic and strives for improvement in standards and provision and is a good role model for other staff. Self-evaluation is good and leads to regular development sessions to build teachers' skills and enhance learning for students. Lesson plans in Year 9 are co-ordinated well with middle schools, but they lack a formalised approach to include literacy, numeracy and citizenship links.
94. Resources for the subject are good and are much better than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers make very good use of interactive whiteboards and classrooms are equipped with sufficient modern computers for individual use in the largest classes. Wall displays are bright and aid learning. The technicians and network manager are competent and highly valued. They are responsive, knowledgeable and ensure that there is a reliable, well-maintained network of computers. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

95. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is good. Good facilities are available in most departments. Where they have access, teachers are adept in the use of interactive whiteboards to enhance teaching and learning. ICT resources are very good in the student support centre and these resources contribute very much to students' learning. Good use of ICT to improve students' presentations occurs in English, history, modern foreign languages, design and technology, and art and design. Students' standards in the application of ICT across the curriculum are good.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of history is good and teamwork is effective.
- Specialist teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and use these qualities to good effect.
- High quality explanations and questioning enable students to learn well.
- Procedures for scrutinising the work of students lack rigour.

Commentary

96. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement for students, including those with special educational needs. Students of all abilities demonstrate increasingly good factual knowledge and understanding of history. They acquire a good range of skills in the analysis and interpretation of sources. Students undertake a good range of writing tasks and the content and presentation of their work are good.
97. In 2003, GCSE results were average. They were below those of previous years following a change in the examining board used. The department has now reverted to the original examining board and provisional results for 2004 show an improvement. Overall, there is little

difference in the performance of boys and girls. GCSE is offered as both a full and short course and students' results are similar on each of these.

98. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average. This represents good achievement by students who opt for history on both the full and short courses. They have a good knowledge and understanding of topics such as the causes of the First World War and Russia during the period of the revolution. Students' written work is well organised. It shows a good understanding of the subject matter and evidence is used well to substantiate their views. Coursework is good and demonstrates students' skills with the interpretation and evaluation of sources. Some students make good use of information and communication technology to enhance the presentation of their work.
99. The quality of teaching in history is good. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge. They are enthusiastic and committed and use a range of effective approaches in the classroom that make learning fun but purposeful. High quality explanations and skilful questioning enable students to learn well. In some lessons, good use is made of starter activities to engage students and end-of-lesson sessions are used effectively to consolidate learning. However, some teaching in Year 9 does not offer enough challenge, particularly to the most able students. Students' work is well marked. Students have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and how they are performing against national expectations. Relationships in the classroom are good and students display positive attitudes to their work.
100. The leadership and management of history are good, with a strong commitment to raising standards. Teamwork is effective and members of the department regularly share ideas and resources. Schemes of work have been revised and provide good guidance to members of the department. A good programme of visits for students in Years 9 to 11 enhances the curriculum. The department has a good plan for further improvement. Aspects of departmental review, such as the formal scrutiny and analysis of students' work, need further development. Specialist teachers are very well qualified. Accommodation and learning resources are of good quality and meet the needs of the curriculum well. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have improved steadily in recent years.
- Teachers use their expert knowledge of the subject and of examination requirements to ensure that students are prepared very well for GCSE.
- Students concentrate well, stay on task and learn well because teaching is well organised and lively.
- Students are particularly well trained in making decisions and solving geographical problems so that their research projects and coursework are very good.
- Teachers work well as a team and share an ambitious vision for further improvements in quality and standards.
- The lack of computers in classrooms restricts the use of information and communication technology in lessons.

Commentary

101. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average. In 2004, results improved still further, continuing a pattern of steady improvement since the last inspection. Although girls' results are better than boys', the gap is less than nationally. Results on the GCSE short course, introduced recently, were less good, but the department has analysed the reasons and has

put in place corrective measures. The standard of current work on this course is well above average.

102. When students arrive at Corfe Hills, their geographical skills are satisfactory but their knowledge of places is a little below average. They achieve well so that, by the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Able students produce very high quality work, using advanced mathematical techniques to calculate correlations and interpreting the results accurately. Supported by staff, students with significant learning difficulties participate fully and achieve well.
103. Students make good and accelerating progress as they move through the school. They concentrate hard, make considerable effort with their work in class and at home and behave very well in lessons. Students therefore achieve well in geography. By the end of Year 11, students' work is well above average. Students have a mature understanding of differences in development across the world and of the effects of physical processes on people. Their skills are very good, shown in their high-quality coursework and research projects.
104. Students learn and achieve well because of the good teaching and the well-planned curriculum they receive. Some teaching is very good. Teachers not only know their subject very well but also have detailed understanding of examination requirements. They use this knowledge to ensure, through revision and study guides, that their students are very well prepared for GCSE. Lessons are planned very well and move at a rapid pace. As a result, time on task is extremely high and students learn well in all lessons. The most able students, when given the opportunity to 'fly' in research projects and coursework, produce excellent work, but the same chance is not always made available to them in lessons. Students' progress is monitored well and their work is assessed accurately. However, marking does not always help them understand how to improve.
105. The curriculum is well planned, with two other great strengths. Through enquiry-based work the department trains students very well in the skills of research and decision making, based on a wide range of case studies and practical and field work. Work in geography also makes a very good contribution to students' literacy and numeracy, their personal development and their growth as good citizens of the local area and of the world.
106. The subject is very well led. In the very short time since her arrival the head of faculty has evaluated the subject's performance accurately and has set out well-chosen priorities for improvement. Teachers work together very well and share an ambitious vision for further improvement. Management of the department is good.
107. Geography has improved well since the last inspection. Standards, already impressive, have risen and progress has accelerated. The support provided for the least-able students has improved and their achievement has risen accordingly. Several aspects of teaching have improved still further. Only the use of computers remains a weakness. Teachers have worked hard to increase the use of these in lessons, but the lack of computers in classrooms limits what can be achieved.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for the subject now meets statutory requirements.
- Very well prepared teaching engages students in learning.
- The effective curriculum significantly enriches personal development.
- Teachers sometimes do not give enough time for students to reflect on issues.

Commentary

108. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement, given that students' standards in the subject on arrival in the school vary considerably, with many having below average standards in religious education. All students follow the short course GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. Results in this course were well below average in 2003 but improved in 2004. Because all students follow this course the school is able to meet the requirement that all students study religious education until the end of Year 11. This was not the case when the school was last inspected
109. Standards for students currently in Year 11 are average and they achieve well given their starting points. This indicates that the improvements seen in the 2004 results are being continued. This is due to closer attention being paid to the impact of assessment on raising attainment levels. More able students produce some very reflective, evaluative work and are stretched by challenging marking. Less able students struggle to express their ideas and their evaluation skills are weak. They are, however, increasingly supported in developing writing skills and, as a result, show improvement over time. Students who have special educational needs achieve as well as the others because they receive extra support and because some material is tailored to their needs. A small group are entered for the AS level philosophy of religion examination at the end of Year 11. The quality of critical thinking and argument of these students is very good and their standards are above average.
110. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good features. Teachers provide students with a rich and varied mix of learning activities, making very good use of technology and other resources. Students readily discuss issues in smaller groups and through these activities sharpen their thinking and refine their ideas. Sometimes, however, not enough time is given for students to digest and reflect on the conflicting ideas met within the lessons and to evaluate different opinions. Assessment is secure and used well, so that students are aware of their progress.
111. The subject makes a very significant contribution to the personal development of the students, not only in the spiritual and moral aspects, but also in the working out of these values and beliefs through citizenship and the strands of personal and social education.
112. Leadership and management are good, with a vision of religious education which is relevant to the needs of all students. Non-specialist teachers are supported well with material and advice. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The intervening time has seen the introduction of the GCSE course, the AS level philosophy of religion option and the compliance with statutory requirements for religious education.

Leisure and tourism

This course has only been running for three weeks. There are, therefore, no results or significant body of students' work. The course has made a promising start. The students are enthusiastic and well behaved and the teaching and organisation of the programme are very good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Teachers, through their enthusiasm, help students adopt good attitudes to the subject.
- Standards are above average overall but vary between different aspects of the subject.
- There is a clear vision for further improvement in the department, particularly in building on current strengths.
- Departmental displays are inspirational.
- Teamwork is at the core of the good leadership.

Commentary

113. Because students' experience of design and technology has been variable in their middle schools, standards on entry to the school are average. By the end of Year 9, students' work is of above average standard, representing good achievement during this first year. In 2003, results in GCSE examinations were above average, though with some variation between aspects of the subject. Results in textiles were well above average, while those in food and graphics were above average. Results in resistant materials and electronics were average. Results again varied from subject to subject in 2004. Students currently in Year 11 are working at average standards, representing good achievement for this group of students.
114. The teaching of design and technology is good. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject and the good relationships they form with students have a positive effect on students' motivation. Students learn well because they have good attitudes and behaviour. Lessons are generally well planned and students are taught basic skills through design-and-make projects, which they enjoy. Teachers give good individual support, resulting in good progress for all students, including those with special educational needs. Occasionally, the tasks undertaken are rather prescriptive and this tends to limit the scope of students and especially the most able, to develop their own ideas well.
115. The use of information and communication technology is good and improving, with new equipment that will help improve students' industrial awareness. Technician support is adequate and of a good standard, resulting in the smooth running of lessons because materials are readily available. In resistant materials, teaching lacks challenge and expectations are not high enough. This variation is reflected in examination results for different aspects of the subject. Good arrangements for the assessment and recording of students' work are now in place and outcomes are shared with students and parents. Hence, students know what they need to do to improve. Departmental displays are inspirational and help set standards throughout the faculty.
116. Year 9 students are taught on a carousel¹¹ system, which gives students a breadth of experience in all areas of design and technology and helps fill any gaps in their knowledge and skills. Because students will have had only limited experience of some aspects of the subject before they arrive in the school, making the correct choices for GCSE option can be difficult for some. However, the carousel course, together with the improved guidance available this year, has helped ensure that students have chosen which aspect of the subject to study well.
117. Leadership of the faculty is now very good. The new head of faculty has a clear vision for the future, which includes a closer link between faculty areas, cross-departmental schemes of work and project themes. Management is good. Planning is in hand for professional

¹¹ This is a system whereby each group of students has a short course in each of the components of the course, such as resistant materials, textiles etc. before moving to the next.

development for teachers to raise standards in creativity and design. Staffing, accommodation and resources are all very good. Significant attention is being given to building on the strengths already in the department, to the benefit of all aspects of the subject. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The assessment and recording of students' work and the increased use of computer-aided design and manufacture are notable developments since that time.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The assessment and academic monitoring of students is excellent.
- Teachers provide a very high degree of challenge for students, leading to students achieving very well and gaining impressive results in examinations.
- The highly effective team of teachers focuses determinedly on self-evaluation to raise standards.

Commentary

118. When students join the school in Year 9 their standards in art and design are above average. Students achieve well, extending their art experience so that standards at the end of Year 9 remain above average.
119. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average, with almost all students gaining at least a C grade. Results were similar in 2004. This represents very good achievement for the students who opted for the subject. Standards seen during the inspection indicate that very good results are likely to be maintained in the future. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as do others. Talented students are provided with work to stretch their capabilities.
120. Teaching and learning are very good, explaining why standards and achievements are as they are. Teachers prepare lessons very well. They circulate in the classroom engaging students in their learning by either giving help and advice or challenging the most able students with open-ended questions. Students respond very well to the teachers' high expectations and, consequently, the attitudes of students are very positive. They understand the principles of creating imaginative outcomes and how to manipulate the formal elements of art very well. Information and communication technology is used very well in art teaching, not least because of ease of access to computers.
121. Assessment of students' work is detailed and accurate and teachers keep comprehensive records. From these, students have an excellent idea of how they can improve. To support this, they are given targets to meet, which are reviewed at appropriate intervals. Careful use of assessment information means that teachers match tasks well to the needs of individuals and this contributes strongly to students' very good achievement. It also helps identify and support students who are underachieving and enables the generation of fresh targets to stretch the more able.
122. Leadership and management are very good. The experienced head of subject has created an excellent team by her approach to the individuals in it. The views of all teachers are sought and valued, particularly when the rigorous departmental self-evaluation takes place. The subject leader has an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and, consequently, has firm ideas about how to move it forward in the future. Very good day-to-day management helps sustain the momentum of students' learning. Very good steps are

being taken to manage curriculum review so that more students get the highest grades at GCSE. Whilst lesson observation takes place to satisfy performance management, there is scope for the further sharing of good practice to support professional development. The lack of technical support in the department is a significant barrier to learning.

123. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards have risen and teaching, learning, leadership and management are now very good.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent musical leadership and very good relationships inspire students' learning.
- Students' skills are evident in the many impressive performances of orchestras and bands.
- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 promotes students' independent learning.
- The use of assessment to guide students is an identified area for improvement.

Commentary

124. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average. This represents very good achievement. Students are developing good performance skills in individual ensemble playing and singing.
125. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average and this is reflected in GCSE results. Steps are being taken to improve this. Student performances are accurate and ensemble playing is very good. Students give sensitive performances of rare quality and their compositions indicate a real understanding of techniques. Impressive class and ensemble performances make a good contribution to students' spiritual, social and cultural education. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good, with no variation in the achievement of boys and girls and for those students with special educational needs. Excellent relationships between teachers and students in lessons inspire high standards of class, ensemble and individual instrumental performances.
126. The teaching of music is very good overall, and particularly so in Years 10 and 11. In Year 9 it is good. Where teaching in Year 9 is very good it is characterised by high musicianship and energy, a brisk pace and well-planned strategies that help students learn well. This challenges students of all abilities to give performances that are musical and poised. Where teaching is occasionally unsatisfactory, it does not give enough support to students and pace is sometimes too slow, inhibiting students' learning.
127. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good and frequently excellent. The best teaching is characterised by outstanding musicianship and very good planning. This ensures that students make fast progress and develop their independent learning skills well. Consequently, their performances are highly musical and technically accomplished. Students are very committed to their music-making and take responsibility for their part in ensemble work. Students' behaviour is very good in music. The use of assessment in lessons to guide students in their work is satisfactory and is an identified area for further improvement. Although records are kept of students' progress, this information is not used well enough to extend students' learning.
128. The department's musical leadership is inspirational, with a clear vision for future developments. Management is very good and activities and instrumental lessons are well organised. School support for the extensive extra-curricular programme and instrumental tuition is impressive. Accommodation is spacious and is used very well. Resources are very good, but the department does not have enough computers to make further progress in establishing a music technology course at A-level.

129. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Well above average results in examinations have been maintained and the time allocated for music now meets statutory requirements. The use of information and communication technology is now a regular feature of lessons. The school has sustained its high reputation for music, which is an extremely valued aspect of school life.

Drama

130. Work in drama was sampled. In 2003, GCSE results in drama were well above average, with girls performing better than boys. Achievement in lessons is very good as a result of very good teaching. Lessons have very clear objectives, are well structured, well paced and very well managed. Teachers use a whole range of expert strategies to develop drama skills. Well-devised improvisations, acting in role and highly pertinent questioning all extend and develop students' ideas. Students' learning is greatly enhanced by excellent student-teacher relationships. Students are engaged, focused and actively involved in drama. They evaluate their own work and that of others constructively. Students' writing is detailed and perceptive, particularly their sharply analytical theatre reviews.
131. Drama is very well led and managed and has three specialist members of staff. Assessment of GCSE coursework is thorough, accurate and helpful to students. The department puts on inspiring productions which attract many students of all ages. Students' commitment to productions enables them to gain in confidence and self-esteem which has a positive impact across the school. The department also runs many successful theatre trips and other visits.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good and caring leadership promotes a high level of commitment from teachers.
- The very good coaching skills of teachers enable all students to learn very well.
- Outstanding care and guidance of students promotes very good relationships.
- High expectations of students of all abilities maintain pace and purpose to lessons.

Commentary

132. Students achieve well during their first year in school so that, by the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Both boys and girls taking the GCSE course continue to achieve well so that, by Year 11, standards are well above average. Results in these examinations are well above average and have improved in the past three years. In the core physical education course¹² students show a high level of commitment to their work and maintain good progress.
133. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good coaching and assessment techniques. They successfully break down a skill into achievable parts, enabling students of all abilities to gain success. The high expectations and challenge demanded of students ensure enthusiasm and commitment in their activities. Consequently, both pace and purpose are maintained and are routinely present in lessons. The outstanding care and guidance of students provided by teachers and assistants promote very good relationships, which are significant both in students' personal development and in their improvement in performance. Individual expertise in a wide variety of activities creates a powerful body of subject knowledge and support for students. Sometimes, students are required to assess their own

¹² Taken by all students in Years 10 and 11.

performance, but this practice is not routine and is not related closely enough to National Curriculum levels.

134. Leadership and management are very good. Caring and inspirational leadership promotes a culture of improvement, with routine and regular guidance on teaching skills and styles. Enthusiasm is generated amongst teachers, other professionals and students, and this is exemplified in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. These are popular with students and are significant in maximising the potential of all students and especially the talented. Planning is well presented and shows a clear understanding of the needs of the students. Creative initiatives are outlined to provide specific programmes for different groups of students and proposals to improve the accommodation are in place. Although shared usage of the sports hall presents difficulties in some lessons, management and teaching ensure that interruption to learning is kept to a minimum. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, as the quality of teaching has improved and examination results continue to rise.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Education

Provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Students do well in the full GCSE course, but less well in the short course.
- Teaching varies too much in quality to guarantee that all students achieve well.
- Whilst some teachers ensure that the most able students are challenged and less able students are supported, others do not.
- Some teaching is too passive for students who prefer more active learning styles that engage their interest.

Commentary

135. Standards in the full GCSE course in 2003 were well above average and 2004 results were better than this. In the short GCSE course, standards were below average in 2003 but improved in 2004. Results on the full course in 2004 were as predicted, but students on the short course gained results that were well below those predicted by their teachers.
136. Students' achievement in business education is satisfactory and students in Year 11 are working at average standards. However, because tasks are not modified to meet the needs of students in some lessons, the most able are not always stretched and the least able are not adequately supported. The better teachers know their students well and use this knowledge to help less able students where the teaching materials prove too difficult. This is particularly evident for students with special educational needs. Students are generally well motivated, very well behaved and keen to learn and when they are taught well their attitudes to lessons are very positive. However, when teaching is unsatisfactory they behave in challenging ways, as their concentration is poor and they are unwilling to give of their best.
137. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. In the best lessons seen during the inspection, students learned very well because of well-paced and varied lesson content, with the teacher adopting imaginative and exciting approaches. The teacher made effective use of resources, including information and communication technology. However, this sort of teaching is not the norm. In too many lessons teaching is heavily teacher focused and slow moving, which means that students' learning is unsatisfactory. In these lessons, planning is inadequate and stimulating teaching aids such

as interactive whiteboards and computer-generated presentations are rejected in favour of more traditional approaches. Students' skills in independent learning are under-developed and this prevents the most able students working at a faster and more productive pace.

138. In the best lessons, on-going assessment enables teachers to modify lessons as they take place to ensure that all students learn successfully. Marking is thorough and evaluative and designed to help students improve. Teachers also make good use of test results to modify the curriculum and teaching styles. Once again, however, this is not true in other lessons. In these other lessons teachers do not, for example, use question and answer sessions well enough to identify which students have or have not understood concepts or learned key skills. Hence, these students fall further behind.
139. Satisfactory subject leadership and management ensure that most students gain grades that match their potential through assiduous chasing of coursework, making sure deadlines are met and running revision workshops after school. Although there is a willingness to work together as a team, activities do not yet extend to the preparation of common lesson plans as well as schemes of work in order to bring about greater overall quality and consistency in teaching and learning. The department has made satisfactory progress in many aspects of its provision since the last inspection, but improvement in teaching remains a priority.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

140. The school provides a religious, personal and social education course (called RPSE) and a citizenship education programme for all its students. One focal point for the teaching of citizenship is the RPSE course, but elements are also taught through the tutorial programme, assemblies and the other subjects of the curriculum. The religious element of the RPSE course is examined, whereas citizenship and personal and social education are not. However, there are plans for a GCSE short course in citizenship in 2005 or 2006. Citizenship was inspected but, since it is inextricably bound up with the RPSE programme, judgements on personal and social education are included.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Citizenship makes a strong contribution to students' personal development.
- Provision for citizenship is evaluated carefully and good improvement plans have been written and implemented.
- The teaching of citizenship within the personal and social education programme is challenging and very well planned, whilst teaching in tutorial sessions is inconsistent.
- Citizenship is not yet separately reported to parents, as the law requires.

Commentary

141. Standards of work throughout the school are above average and students' achievement in citizenship is good. Students gain knowledge of rights and responsibilities and relate these to personal choices around sensitive issues such as relationships, drugs and alcohol and to broader topics of family life, national and international politics, environmental tensions and differential development. The citizenship programme also develops students' skills, values and attitudes. They show a mature ability to discuss sensitive issues, listening to each other and weighing arguments well, and a willingness to participate as active citizens, shown in particular by the school's sustained, extensive charitable work. A whole-school assembly in which this work was celebrated was an inspirational occasion for all those who attended. Elements of the citizenship curriculum are taught through most other National Curriculum subjects, including history and geography. In these subjects the standards of students'

written work and their achievement are good. In geography, for example, students do good work in Years 9 to 11 on issues of fair trade and on the environmental dilemmas surrounding rain forests, and racism is examined in detail in history and religious education.

142. The main outcome of the citizenship course is that the students are good citizens, respectful of other people and tolerant of their views, and active citizens who take part and contribute. By the time they have reached the top of the school, they are very good role models for younger students and help them in a number of ways. The citizenship curriculum is very well organized, so that the contributions of the RPSE programme, tutorials, assemblies, year and school councils and other subjects are maximized and made coherent. In addition, enrichment days, in which students form political parties and hold elections, greatly enhance their understanding of the political process.
143. The teaching of citizenship is good overall, but this judgement masks variations. A team, comprising the head of department, senior managers and heads of year, teaches the RPSE course very well. Lessons are exciting and are conducted at a cracking pace and, consequently, students concentrate hard and learn very well. Teaching and learning of the citizenship elements in other subjects are also good and often very good. However, the tutorial element is taught inconsistently. This is because some of the very large team of tutors give planning more attention than others.
144. The subject is led very well and managed well. A series of audits of provision have ensured that evaluation has been thorough and that action plans have led to improvement since the last inspection. The vision and ambition for the subject held by those who lead it are impressive and the way they have put together a complex programme, ensuring that heads of other subjects play their full part, has been excellent. Monitoring of teaching is satisfactory, but has not yet ensured consistent quality in the tutorial element. Assessment of students' work is at an early stage of development, as it is in many schools. Reports, although they include detailed comments on RPSE, do not comply with the requirement to make identifiable judgements on students' progress and achievement in citizenship.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, thirteen subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 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 and design	29	96.5	80.1	40.4	23.7	n/a	29.9
Biology	87	81.6	65.2	18.4	11.1	n/a	20.6
Business studies	57	85.9	76.4	24.6	16.3	n/a	26.2
Chemistry	47	83.0	72.7	17.0	13.9	n/a	24.1
Classical studies	50	92.0	87.4	34.0	34.3	n/a	35.2
Drama	35	100.0	86.5	45.7	19.6	n/a	30.6
Economics	12	83.8	73.6	50.0	20.1	n/a	26.4
English/English language	65	96.9	82.9	16.9	17.5	n/a	28.7
English literature	46	95.7	85.9	13.0	19.1	n/a	30.2
French	18	100.0	78.2	61.1	18.9	n/a	30.0
Design and technology	25	92.0	74.9	24.0	15.1	n/a	24.3
General studies	255	82.3	73.9	27.8	17.8	n/a	26.6
Geography	53	88.7	74.3	17.0	19.8	n/a	28.3
Geology	23	100.0	n/a	47.8	n/a	n/a	n/a
German	6	83.3	81.5	33.3	19.3	n/a	30.7
History	111	98.2	80.7	32.4	19.5	n/a	30.5
Home economics	16	100.0	78.4	43.8	17.6	n/a	25.6
Information technology	91	98.9	67.0	25.3	10.9	n/a	22.3
Mathematics	57	75.4	61.9	38.6	17.1	n/a	20.7
Music	9	77.8	86.5	33.3	21.4	n/a	32.3
Physics	50	86.0	68.6	34.0	14.4	n/a	23.9

¹³ 2003 is the most recent year for which validated results are available

Psychology	58	82.8	n/a	15.5	n/a	n/a	n/a
Religious studies	8	87.5	80.2	25.0	22.6	n/a	30.1
Sociology	56	98.2	71.8	58.9	18.4	n/a	25.9
Spanish	12	100.0	78.5	47.7	17.7	n/a	28.3
Sports/PE studies	54	92.6	73.2	33.3	11.4	n/a	25.0

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	15	100.0	98.6	33.3	50.2	78.7	87.5
Biology	34	100.0	96.4	44.1	39.2	82.4	78.6
Business studies	33	100.0	98.7	21.2	36.8	73.3	80.1
Chemistry	21	100.0	97.6	47.6	49.0	81.0	84.9
Classical studies	19	100.0	99.5	26.3	55.9	78.9	90.9
Drama	27	100.0	99.5	40.7	40.1	88.1	83.6
Economics	6	100.0	98.9	100.0	52.0	106.7	88.3
English/English language	35	100.0	99.4	28.6	36.3	77.7	80.9
English literature	31	100.0	99.5	71.0	46.5	96.8	86.5
French	9	100.0	98.8	77.8	51.5	106.7	87.6
Design and technology	10	100.0	97.8	20.0	35.0	70.0	77.9
General studies	50	96.0	94.7	32.0	31.0	72.4	73.1
Geography	39	97.4	98.7	33.3	44.5	83.1	84.0
History	39	100.0	99.0	53.8	44.6	89.7	84.6
Home economics	12	100.0	98.1	25.0	34.6	76.7	76.6
Information technology	45	100.0	95.6	24.4	24.6	70.2	69.5
Mathematics	26	100.0	96.7	46.2	55.6	88.5	88.8
Music	3	100.0	98.8	100.0	38.9	106.7	81.1
Other sciences	8	100.0	97.3	75.0	41.5	102.5	80.3
Other social sciences	27	100.0	97.4	25.9	42.7	72.6	81.3

Physics	15	100.0	96.7	40.0	44.6	89.3	81.7
Sociology	35	100.0	98.2	60.0	44.3	94.9	83.6
Spanish	5	100.0	98.3	100.0	50.2	116.0	86.9
Sports/PE studies	42	100.0	98.0	21.4	30.9	71.9	75.2
Business (VCE)	1	100.0	65.0	0.0	14.6	78.8	60.1
Health and social care (VCE)	25	100.0	67.7	40.0	14.5	91.1	63.5
Travel and tourism (VCE)	29	100.0	71.8	20.7	14.5	68.7	62.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subjects in this curriculum area were English, including both English language and English literature, and French. Work was also sampled in Spanish. Here standards are above average at both AS and A-level as a result of good teaching and learning.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been an improvement in the number of students gaining the highest grades in AS level English language.
- Students' learning is enhanced by their very good response to stimulating activities provided by their teachers.
- The very good leadership and management of the department have been fundamental to raising standards.
- Relationships between students and teachers are excellent, giving students the confidence to take responsibility for their learning.

Commentary

145. Standards in A-level English literature were well above average in 2003, whilst those in English language were average. These results were as expected, given students' prior attainment. The department has had significant success in more than doubling the numbers of students gaining higher grades in AS level English language in 2004. Students achieve very well in their sixth form English courses.
146. Teaching and learning are very good and learning is also greatly enhanced by excellent student-teacher relationships. Teachers are experienced and knowledgeable and have high expectations of their students and, hence, lessons are well planned, well structured and well resourced. Teaching is challenging, stimulating and expertly managed and has a very positive impact on learning.
147. Students learn very well because they are attentive, confident, focused and engaged and contribute enthusiastically to discussion. They use research skills widely and make highly competent presentations, often using information and communication technology. Students' evaluation of each other's work is perceptive and strengthens their learning. Students read widely and their writing, particularly in literature, shows a high level of analytical skill. In language their writing demonstrates their ability to understand and effectively apply technical vocabulary.
148. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The department uses a wide range of data to analyse standards and responds effectively when results do not match expectations. Assessment of students' work is thorough, diagnostic and evaluative and this is consistent across the department. The department is well resourced. Although not ideal, the accommodation is not having an adverse effect on learning in the sixth form. The department offers a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities which support and enhance learning. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Key Skills in language and literacy

Standards of literacy in other subjects in the sixth form are good, but the development of literacy skills varies across subjects. There is no whole-school policy to develop key skills in communication across the school, but good work is undertaken by some departments.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well above average standards at A-level.
- Students show high levels of commitment to language learning.
- Course and lesson planning, assessment and mentoring are very thorough.
- Teachers do not require students' involvement in evaluating their work.

Commentary

149. Standards in French at A-level are well above average, whilst in AS level they are average. Students make very good progress. Their achievement is good in AS level courses and very good by the time they reach A-level.
150. In all their work, students show high and sustained levels of commitment, rising to the demands and challenges of language learning expressed in their teachers' high levels of expectation for them. Teachers combine their strengths of excellent subject and course knowledge in concerted team planning, but working to students' individual strengths in order to encourage and engage them. There is a very effective mix of teacher-led methods and use of varied original resources. Teachers use both collaborative and independent activities to enrich students' learning, but do not require students to take responsibility for the evaluation of their work. Hence students are over-reliant on teachers to identify for them what they need to do to improve.
151. Teaching and learning are very good. Through the use of tests and other assessments, teachers closely monitor the progress students are making. This enables them to work with individual students, guiding them in how to improve their work. In their independent work, as well as in class, students show very good application and are highly productive. They respond well to challenging and varied tasks and their best work is outstandingly fluent and imaginative. Good contacts with link schools abroad and trips enrich and deepen learning.
152. French is very well led and well managed in the sixth form. The head of department is a very good role model for others in the team and there is clarity of vision regarding how the subject can develop further. Teachers make very good use of self-evaluation as a means of improving their teaching. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, particularly in improving teaching and learning.

MATHEMATICS

The department offers several different combinations of core, mechanics, statistics and discrete modules to students in Years 12 and 13, which lead to qualifications ranging from a single AS through to two A-levels in mathematics and further mathematics. The whole provision was the focus of this inspection.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently above average.
- Students achieve well, with the most able achieving very well.
- Teachers meet the needs of the examination syllabuses well but do not develop students' independent thinking skills enough.

Commentary

153. Results in 2003 examinations were above average and were significantly better in 2004, especially in the proportion of students gaining higher grades. This maintains a pattern of above average results over the last three years.
154. Students have average standards on entry to the course. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average at this early stage of the course in Year 12 and above average in Year 13. Standards are comparable in different modules. From observations of students' work and lessons, achievement is good. It is best for those with higher standards on entry. Females achieve as well as their more numerous male peers. The department recruits well and retention rates on courses are consistently high.
155. Teaching is good. Teachers are well-qualified, knowledgeable mathematicians and experienced at this level. Consequently, work is very well structured and planned to address all aspects of the syllabus. Students are very well prepared for examinations. Teachers' high levels of knowledge enable them to challenge and extend the thinking of gifted mathematicians who achieve very well.
156. Relationships are good and there is considerable mutual respect. Students are very committed, enjoy the subject and cope well with its demands. They feel very well supported and advised by their teachers and most are confident enough to ask for help. They value the accessibility of their teachers beyond the school day. Students with lower standards on entry find the pace demanding and make slower progress than their more able peers. The majority of teaching is based on teacher presentation and textbook examples, so that, overall, it lacks variety. In the best lessons, more varied activities lead to very good learning. Students use information and communication technology for graph work, producing and varying graphs of functions with confidence. The high level of structure and examination preparation means students do not always develop as fully independent learners so that their achievement is good rather than very good.
157. Leadership and management are good. Many students participate in mathematics challenges, which broaden their view of the subject. Improvement since the last inspection is good with above average standards maintained.

Key skills in mathematics

Students' mathematical competence is good. Their skills are usually adequate for their subjects of study and often better. For example, in sociology, students use statistical techniques with confidence, while in business education they accurately plot and use supply and demand graphs. In biology some students have very weak numerical and graphical skills and struggle to cope with the demands of the course. In French, students analyse data on drug misuse but do not then incorporate this into their reports.

SCIENCE

The focus was on biology, chemistry and physics. Geology was also sampled. Geology is a popular and successful subject in the sixth form. Results are very good at AS and Alevel. Almost all students pass the examination and most achieve the higher grades, doing better in geology than they do in their other subjects. The subject is very well taught. Teaching is lively, authoritative and well organised. The teaching of aspects of geology which students find difficult, such as thinking in three dimensions, is particularly good.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are good because of good teaching and assessment.
- Good leadership and management give clear direction to the subject.

Commentary

158. In 2003, results in biology were above average at A-level and well above average at AS level. More students achieved higher grades than nationally. Female students achieved better results than male students. In 2004, students performed better in the higher grades, but the overall pass rate declined. Achievement continues to be satisfactory. Whilst the more able students achieved well, some less able students did not do so well. Some students with very low GCSE scores failed to achieve a pass grade at the end of Year 12. Current students in Years 12 and 13 are only a little way into their course but are achieving as expected. The more able and average students are achieving well and are on course to obtain AS and A-level grades. Less able students on the AS course only learn well in lessons as long as teachers support them. Some of the least able do not have the required learning skills to cope with the amount and complexity of the work, which limits standards over the course.
159. Teaching and learning are good. There are several strengths in the teaching that underpin the good quality of students' learning. Teachers share clear learning intentions and lessons are well prepared. They set and mark regular homework to build on work completed in lessons. In most lessons, relationships are very good, which results in the right climate for learning, and most students work well together. Where learning is good or very good, teachers use specialist knowledge to challenge students to think for themselves and to assess their own understanding. Where this is not the case, less able students are not engaged by the activity and, although the teacher encourages and supports them, learning is only satisfactory. Teaching supports the development of literacy effectively and the use of numeracy is appropriate. Students use computers confidently to find out information and to make presentations.
160. Assessment is good, with regular and thorough marking of students' work, which helps them to improve. Requirements of examinations are taught well. Targets are set for students and teachers monitor progress on a regular basis. Teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses through their review of regular assignments and homework.
161. Leadership is good. There is a clear focus on raising achievement and extensive support is provided to students. Requirements of examinations are fully integrated into the curriculum. The biology department works effectively as a team and teachers are keen to improve achievement. Management of biology is good. Monitoring of students' progress is rigorous and support is provided for those who are not achieving as well as they should. Technicians work effectively to provide good support to teachers. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Results in biology continue to fluctuate but this is due to variations in prior attainment of students taking the course.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership is improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, but not all use it to match work well to students' needs.
- Marking of examination questions is good, but day-to-day marking is inconsistent.

Commentary

162. Results in AS and A-level examinations in 2003 were average. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Similar standards were maintained in 2004 when, once again, all Year 13 students gained at least a pass grade. Female students achieved better results than male students. Achievement is satisfactory. All students, including those joining the sixth form from other schools, work well together. At this early stage in the year, students currently following chemistry courses are working at average standards. They are achieving much as expected when account is taken of their broadly average standards when they start the course.
163. Teaching and learning are good. Recently introduced course booklets have improved teaching by promoting active learning. The main feature of good lessons is the students' full involvement in their own learning. Students are given responsibility to plan and research topics and give presentations to others using information and communication technology. All teachers have good subject knowledge and can explain ideas in chemistry, but not all use this knowledge to make the work stimulating and to match work to students' needs. Sometimes students are not consistently involved and challenged by rigorous questioning and discussion to think more critically. Nor is theory related to everyday topics. As a result, students' learning in these lessons is only satisfactory. Homework extends learning and the requirements of examinations are taught well. Teachers provide additional support to students who are not achieving as much as they should and students find this helpful.
164. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers set targets and monitor progress on a regular basis. They know students' strengths and weaknesses through regular tests and the setting, marking and follow up of examination questions. Students find marking against examination criteria consistent and very helpful. It helps them to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Marking of other written work varies in quality and not all of it guides students on how to improve. Students' work ranges from that of a consistently high standard to work that is incomplete and of a lower quality.
165. Good leadership gives clear direction to chemistry. There is a strong focus on raising students' achievement by improving teaching and learning, marking and the curriculum. The head of chemistry has introduced teaching booklets that promote active and more independent learning and improve students' study skills. All teaching follows the content of the booklets but as yet not all teaching encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. Management is good. The monitoring of students' progress and of teaching is regular. This enables support to be provided for students who are not achieving as well as they should. Technicians work efficiently and provide good support to teachers. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with improved results in examinations.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A team of enthusiastic specialist teachers shares a commitment to the success of the students.
- Students achieve well at both AS and Alevel because the quality of teaching is consistently good.
- In the Year 12 course the previous standards of some students and their course combinations are sometimes insufficient to ensure success.
- Relationships between students and their teachers are very good.

Commentary

166. In 2003, Alevel results were well above average overall and very high for male students. Results showed further improvement in 2004, maintaining the pattern of recent years. In the AS level course in 2003, results were average, though a significant number of students failed the course. This is attributed to their having low entry grades and an inadequate mathematical background to cope with the levels of numeracy associated with the course. In 2004 there was a significant improvement in the overall pass rate for AS-level. The students reached their anticipated grades and in many cases exceeded them. Overall, achievement is good, especially for Year 13. Students currently following the subject are working at above average standards and achieving well.
167. Teaching is good and most students make good progress in lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable and authoritative. Hence, lessons are well planned and resourced in a very efficient manner. This gives pace and structure to lessons that maintain the interest and involvement of all students. The varied teaching methods employed and the committed involvement of the students leads to effective learning. This is particularly true of the practical aspect of the subject, which enables students to be directly involved in their own learning. Students develop their computing and group-work skills well. Modular tests and homework are marked in great detail, with many constructive comments that help students improve and clearly indicate their attainment. Attitudes of students in both Years 12 and 13 are very good and working relations between students and teachers are a strength of the department.
168. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department is determined to raise attainment to an even higher level by ensuring all students reach their potential. The teaching is shared across the department, enabling students to benefit from a variety of teaching styles from subject specialists who work well together and form an effective team. Students' progress is monitored well through a departmental mentoring system and checks made on the use of study periods. Good progress has been made since the last inspection on the points identified. This is particularly true of the increase in the proportion of higher grades at A-level and in students having greater responsibility for managing their own work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' insistence on high standards leads to very good learning.
- The enthusiastic head of department has brought about very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Although most teaching is good, some teaching is slow and lacks interactivity, which leads to students being less motivated.

Commentary

169. In 2003, standards in Alevel examinations were above average, maintaining a pattern of improvement in results in recent years. These results represent good achievement for the students concerned. Students acquire good skills, knowledge and understanding in lessons and they work well independently and collaboratively due to good planning of lessons. There are many more boys than girls studying ICT in the sixth form. They all work productively and have good attitudes.
170. Teaching is very good and thus students learn very well. Teachers who interact well with their students by using stimulating question and answer techniques find that the students are motivated and want to learn. Very good achievement in many lessons is the result of the very good attitudes of students and the very good subject knowledge of teachers. Teachers have established good working relationships with students, resulting in increased students' confidence. Teachers are enthusiastic and expect high standards. They analyse students' progress effectively using good informative data to inform their students of ways to improve.
171. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future and has established an effective team spirit. He is enthusiastic and strives for improvement in standards and provision and is a good role model for other staff. Very good use is made of new teaching technologies and strategies. Self-evaluation is good and leads to regular development sessions to enhance teachers' skills and improve learning for students.
172. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are good. Teachers make very good use of interactive whiteboards. Some rooms do not facilitate good learning because of the awkward placing of projectors and screens. The technicians and network manager are competent and highly valued. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, particularly in the way the team works together.

Key skills in information and communication technology

173. Students develop and apply their information and communication technology skills in other subjects well. Good facilities are available in most departments. Where they have access, teachers are adept in the use of interactive whiteboards to enhance teaching and learning. ICT resources are very good in the student support centre and these resources contribute very much to sixth form students' independent learning. ICT key skills are assessed well in the vocational subjects. Students can use word processing and a range of other software to produce good presentations and they use spreadsheets and databases confidently.

HUMANITIES

History, sociology, psychology and classics were focus subjects in this curriculum area and work was also sampled in geography. Geography is a popular sixth form option and those studying it to A-level achieve well. They make good progress from GCSE and almost all pass. AS-level results have been more mixed, with some top grades and also a significant number who fail. The standard of current work is higher because students are better guided on to courses and because teaching is sharply focused on students' needs. Sixth form geography is very well taught. Teachers use their excellent knowledge of the subject and examination requirements to help students structure and organise their work and revision.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are very enthusiastic about the subject and engage students well with their learning.
- Relationships are very good and students display very good attitudes to learning.

- Students are well supported with note-making skills and examination techniques.

Commentary

174. Results at both AS and A-level were above average in 2003. All students who were entered for the A-level examination in Year 13 gained a pass grade and over half the students gained A and B grades. The AS level examination results were also good. All students who started the course completed it and one-third gained A and B grades. Provisional results for 2004 are similar to those of 2003. The results for students are as expected from their GCSE results. Retention rates are good and in 2003 all students completed the AS and A-level courses.
175. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are above average. The achievement of students on AS and A-level courses is good and is improving. Students have a good knowledge and understanding across all aspects of the course. They analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence effectively to produce well-balanced arguments. Their written work is well presented, carefully organised and well structured.
176. Teaching and learning are now very good and, as a result, achievement is improving. Teachers are very enthusiastic and have very good subject knowledge. Hence, lessons are well organised, with a very good range of strategies and resources that promote very good learning. Imaginative and lively starter activities engage students in learning. Teachers give good-quality explanations and provide challenging questions to extend the students' understanding of the subject matter. A very good feature is the support that students are given with note-making and recording information. The marking of students' work is good, giving good guidance to them on how to improve. Good guidance is provided on examination techniques and marking criteria. Relationships in lessons are very good and students demonstrate very good attitudes to learning. Learning is purposeful but also fun. Students are attentive and work effectively, both independently and collaboratively.
177. Leadership and management of history are good and the department is improving. Teamwork is a good feature in planning and teaching the AS and A-level courses. Leadership of the curriculum and teaching are very good and members of the department provide very good role models for students. The curriculum is good and is enhanced by residential visits to Berlin and Russia. These visits help to develop good attitudes to learning and promote good relationships between students and staff. Teachers' expertise is very well matched to meet the needs of the curriculum. There is insufficient analysis of examination data to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' performance. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students respond well to high expectation and challenge, resulting in very good progress.
- Very good subject knowledge and experienced teaching lead to very good learning.
- Assessment is effective and leads to ongoing improvement over time.
- The advantages of using information and communication technology have yet to be fully seized.

Commentary

178. Results at A-level in 2003 were well above average and were similar in 2004. Standards for students currently in Year 13 are above average. Students have a sound grasp of methodology and perspectives in sociology, as well as sound evaluation skills, because teaching and preparation for the examinations are thorough. The students' own commitment and intellectual effort contribute significantly to their success. The first assignments in Year 12 indicate average to above average attainment. Achievement across the years is very good.

179. Teaching and learning are both very good with some excellent features. The teachers' subject knowledge, which they communicate with enthusiasm, is excellent. Their great experience and past success inspires trust. Students respond readily to high expectations, particularly to the challenging questioning which develops their critical thinking skills. Resources and strategies in lessons are selected for maximum impact and are highly effective.
180. Assessment of work is carefully gauged to make targets achievable for every individual. The most able students are well targeted and stretched. Very helpful marking really shows all students, and especially the less able, how to improve and reach their targets.
181. Leadership and management are both very good. The vision, commitment and planning to get the best out of every student are impressive. The ongoing self-assessment programme in the department informs teaching and learning, and good practice is shared fruitfully between teachers. Information and communication technology is not used enough to enrich the presentation of the subject and on-line curriculum support for independent learning and research is not yet fully in place. This subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development and is a real strength of the school. Sociology was not reported on in the previous inspection report so a judgement about improvement since that time is not possible.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective assessment and marking are helping improve standards and achievement.
- Information and communication technology is used well to encourage independent learning and research.
- The lack of variety in teaching styles and strategies is a barrier to better achievement.
- Material used is not always securely tied to the learning needs of the students.

Commentary

182. Results at A-level in 2003 were well below average but improved in 2004. Students currently in Year 13 are working at average standards. The most able students do well because their research and writing skills are sound. Less able students struggle with the theoretical aspects and their evaluation skills are weak. Extended writing improves over time because of very helpful marking and the use of writing frames and models. Standards at an early stage in the Year 12 course are below average. Achievement is satisfactory. It is no better than this because the ability of some students is not well matched to the demands of the subject and this mismatch is compounded by the lack of material properly tailored to meet their learning needs.
183. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good features. Where teaching is good, independent learning is encouraged by, for instance, the use of challenging questioning. Effective use is made of information and communication technology in gathering resource material. In lessons, students work well and show commitment to the course. Where teaching is only satisfactory, lesson strategies and teaching styles lack variety. As a result, students do not respond with enthusiasm or concern for their own learning and this lack of colour and challenge lowers achievement. Assessment and very helpful marking support learning because students then know what they must do to improve.
184. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. Already some work has been done on improving teaching strategies, but there is still a lack of imagination in lesson preparation and very good practice already in the school is not shared enough. A more stringent assessment is necessary, at the induction stage, of each student's ability to cope with course demands,

to provide better guidance. Students themselves believe the subject has enriched their own personal development, both in self-knowledge and the better understanding of human behaviour. A judgement on improvement since the last inspection is not relevant as the subject was not inspected last time.

Classical Civilisation

Provision in classical civilisation is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students adopt very positive attitudes to classical civilisation due to the enthusiasm of teachers and the many enrichment activities available.
- Teachers give good support to students through mentoring and the provision of study materials.
- Students' written work lacks detail and is not adequately supported by evidence.

Commentary

185. Standards at the end of Year 12 and Year 13 in classical civilisation in 2003 were well below average and lower than at the time of the previous inspection. However, results in 2004 were better and standards seen in lessons were below, rather than well below, average. The number of students studying classical civilisation has increased, with some applying to study a classical subject at university.
186. Students achieve well in lessons, where they are fully involved in their learning. They express their views in class with clarity and conviction, but their written skills are not as strong. In their essay writing they do not write in enough detail and do not support their arguments with evidence from texts or sculpture. Students have very good attitudes to classical civilisation and they respond well to the enrichment activities provided by their teachers.
187. Teaching and learning in classical civilisation are good. Three-quarters of the lessons seen were good or better and these were characterised by brisk pace and high expectations. Students have very good relationships with their teachers and many students ask searching questions in order to advance their understanding. Where teaching is less effective, students are expected to listen for a large part of the lesson and, as a result, they lose interest and concentration.
188. Leadership in classical civilisation is good due to the commitment and enthusiasm of the head of department and her team. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for students, including a visit to Greece and study days at the British and Ashmolean Museums. Management is satisfactory. There are good systems in place to support students out of class through the department's mentoring system. However, the department does not monitor teaching regularly and there is no system for evaluating the progress of new initiatives. Since the previous inspection, provision in classical civilisation has gone through a time of change, with changes of staffing and syllabuses. Students are now responding very well to recently improved provision and standards are rising.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

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

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

No subject in this curriculum area was a focus for the inspection. Work was sampled in art and design, theatre studies and music. In art and design, two lessons were observed. Teaching and learning were good in both. Standards at A-level were below average but achievement, based on

students' AS grades, was good. Students who opt to study sixth form art courses benefit from dedicated studio space. Two sixth-form music lessons were observed. In these, teaching and learning were very good. Standards of work seen were very good and listening skills were being developed well. Sixth-form teaching is enlightened in its explanation of harmony and structure.

189. In theatre studies, results in 2003 were above average, with male students performing better than females. Students achieve very well because teaching is very good. Lessons are well structured and very well managed. Expert interventions by teachers enable students to develop and build their ideas very effectively. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent and contribute significantly to learning and achievement. Students are focused, productive and clearly enjoy drama. They are responsive, confident and contribute well to discussion. Their improvisation skills are excellent and show clear references to key drama practitioners. Students evaluate each other's work constructively and sensitively, suggesting points for development. Their writing shows a high level of competence, particularly in analysing dramatic texts and the written self-evaluation of their own work. Theatre studies' students play a major role in productions and successfully support and mentor younger students. The department also runs many theatre trips many of which have a good impact on the development of students' work.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subject in this curriculum area was a focus for the inspection. Work was sampled in the VCE¹⁴ travel and tourism course. Standards are above average and students achieve well. In the lessons seen, teaching was challenging and fast paced with high expectations of students. Excellent relationships between teachers and students are based on mutual respect and rigour. Students have very good attitudes towards the course and make every effort to improve the quality of their work. Coursework is very well organised and presented.

BUSINESS

The focus subject in this curriculum area was business education, but work was also sampled in economics. The small number of students who choose economics achieve very well. Their results are well above average and better than those they achieve in their other subjects. The work of those currently studying the subject is of a similarly high standard. The one lesson seen was well taught, providing a real challenge to a group of very able students.

Business Education

Provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers sometimes do not explore interesting aspects of their subject beyond the immediate aims of the lesson.
- When students are active participants in lessons they learn well, but this is not a feature of all lessons.

Commentary

190. Results in Alevel examinations were average in 2002 but fell to below average in 2003. Results in 2004¹⁵ showed an improvement over 2003 but the proportion of students gaining A and B grades was low. However, the results over these three years accurately reflect the attainment profile of students embarking on sixth form courses in business education.

¹⁴ VCE – Vocational Certificate of Education

¹⁵ The school is challenging the 2004 results with respect to a particular examination module for 8 students.

191. In AS level examinations in 2003, results were average, having been above average in the previous year. This year, AS level results for Year 12 students were better, but the proportion of students gaining the highest two grades was low. However, Year 13 students' results at this level were well above average. These results reflect the greater maturity of students working at this level. Standards of work of students currently studying business education in Year 13 are average, as are those of Year 12 students. This represents satisfactory achievement for these students.
192. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers know their subject well but sometimes lack the conviction and confidence to make the subject come alive. This is most obvious when teachers stick rigidly to a lesson plan and fail to take advantage of the interest shown by students in wider aspects of business studies. Teaching tends to be traditional in approach, though new and more varied styles are increasingly used. On occasion, a teacher-centred approach leads to the teacher reading the content of worksheets or screen shots to the students and this makes any learning very passive. Where teaching is more adventurous, as in the case of a role-play simulation of difficult industrial relations, students are fully engaged in the lesson. When this happens they develop their knowledge, understanding and skills well. The lack of this approach on a regular basis contributes to students not reaching higher standards. Marking is thorough and evaluative and, as a result, students' notes are well organised and in good order.
193. Students are very positive in their attitude and approach to the courses and they work hard to ensure they have understood the complex theory that sometimes underpins the subject. They are confident and articulate and present their findings from role-play situations in a mature and thoughtful way. They take full advantage of their access to, and skills in, information and communication technology.
194. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. Although the approach to curriculum planning is sometimes rather staid, an increasing proportion of lessons are being planned to take full advantage of the more stimulating teaching materials now available. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, although the variable examination performance of the subject in successive years continues to be a concern.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus for the inspection was on the AVCE health and social care course.

Health and social care

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department provides very good support for students.
- The head of department provides a strong vision and direction for the subject.
- The very good subject knowledge of teachers is shared effectively with students.
- Assessment is detailed and accurate.
- There is no formal monitoring of teaching or development plan for AVCE health and social care.

Commentary

195. AVCE health and social care is a popular subject. Standards in AVCE health and social care were well above the national average in 2003. In the past three years, at least one-third of students have achieved A or B grades and all students have passed. Students currently following the course are also working at well above average standards and achieving very well. Their assessed assignments show in-depth knowledge and understanding of many aspects of health and social care.

196. Year 12 and 13 students show very positive attitudes to their studies and have very good relationships with their teachers. Together, these create a very positive and mature working environment. Students present reasoned answers during discussion and are sensitive in their evaluation of equal opportunities and themes such as bias in conducting research. Year 13 students understand and analyse complex concepts and are comfortable with the use of specialist terminology in their work. They have good computer skills and the use of information and communication technology enables those with weaker literacy skills to produce high-quality written work.
197. Teaching is very good and is supported by thorough planning and very good subject knowledge. Assessment is an integral part of lessons and, as a result, students know what they must do to achieve the next grade. Very good standards of written work are a result of detailed feedback and helpful comments given for improvements. High expectations inspire students' independence and probing questions encourage them to develop intellectually. Teachers encourage students' participation in lessons, thus ensuring that concepts are embedded and confidence maintained.
198. Leadership and management in health and social care are very good. An experienced and committed practitioner leads the department by example. She provides very good professional development support for her team and has a clear vision for the future of the subject. Assessment is detailed and consistent across the department and support systems for students are very good. The department is well resourced and the teaching rooms allow student access to computers both during and outside lesson time. Teaching is monitored through informal visits to lessons, but there are not enough formal observations to identify and share good practice. Health and social care was not inspected during the last inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

In this curriculum area, the school provides a general studies programme, examined at AS-level, for all students. This programme was sampled. Students achieve high standards in this very well taught programme, and their examination results are well above average. The general studies course makes a significant contribution to students' knowledge and understanding of the world and to their development as learners and thinkers.

199. The programme of personal, social and citizenship education in the main school has ensured that, by the time they get into the sixth form, students are fully able to take responsibility as prefects, leaders and role models, and that they discuss and weigh arguments very well. Their participation in the democratic process is very good. Not only do they manage many of their own affairs in the sixth form, but in their role as prefects they also assist staff in their role as prefects and manage aspects of the school council. The senior prefects attend all parents' association meetings and representatives of the school sit on regional and national youth parliaments.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

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