

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Cottingham High School**

Cottingham East Riding of Yorkshire

LEA area: East Riding of Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 118079

Headteacher: Mr Tom Darbyshire

Lead inspector: Val Lynch

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> December 2004

Inspection number: 268788

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1622
School address:	Harland Way Cottingham East Riding of Yorkshire
Postcode:	HU16 5PX
Telephone number:	01482 847498
Fax number:	01482 841053
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Pam Jackson
Date of previous inspection:	October 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The school is a large and popular 11-18 comprehensive school of 1622 students. Of these, 238 are students studying courses in the sixth form. There are a similar number of boys and girls in the main school, but more boys than girls in Year 7. More females than males continue in education after the age of 16. A lower than average proportion of students join the school other than at the start of Year 7. The school is located in the village of Cottingham on the north-west outskirts of Hull. The school has recently been awarded specialist school status as a media arts college. It has also gained recognition as an Investors in People organisation. In 2001 it gained an Artsmark Gold Award and in 2002 a Sportsmark award. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The school has a higher than average proportion of students who have reached above average levels in English in the current Year 7. The proportion of students whose heritage language is not English is small. The school has a small, but significant, number of children from traveller families. The proportion of students with special educational needs is broadly average, as is the proportion of students with statements of special educational need. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average, reflecting the socio-economic circumstances of the areas. Around 25 per cent of students come from within the Hull city boundary. The school has very successful links with three other local schools, and the four high schools and the local further education colleges work together to provide not only post-16 opportunities for students, but also joint staff development. The school encourages the community to use its facilities through the local adult education and youth service based in the school.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1475	Val Lynch	Lead inspector	
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector	
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics
12568	Chris Morris	Team inspector	English
30596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science
18076	Howard Dodd	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32672	Stephen Hammond-Evans	Team inspector	Art and design Post-16 design and technology
33012	Susan Wheeler	Team inspector	Design and technology
3755	Trevor Hulbert	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography
8070	Joe Haves	Team inspector	History
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education
20716	Arthur Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education
15606	Christine Hill	Team inspector	Special educational needs Post-16 art
20619	Jenny Hazlewood	Team inspector	Business education Health and social education
21906	John Scottow	Team inspector	Post-16 chemistry

The inspection contractor was:

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>10</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>14</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES – Work-related learning</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORMS</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>49</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Cottingham High School is a **very good** school with some **excellent** features. Students achieve **very well** because teaching and learning are **very good**. Leadership and management are **very good**. The school provides **very good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher is astute and determined. He is exceptionally well informed and is the driving force behind many recent initiatives;
- By the end of Year 9, students' achievement is very good in English, mathematics and science, providing a very firm foundation on which to build future learning;
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge that they use to provide a variety of activities, which motivate students to learn;
- Staff value, respect, welcome and care for all students, which in turn leads to very good relationships throughout the school and to very good behaviour;
- Senior leaders and middle leaders are responding to the agenda for change and development;
- Art, drama and music provide very good opportunities for students to be creative and to make the maximum use of technology to support their creativity.

The school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection. Test and examination results have been steadily improving, reflecting the national trend. The curriculum has been developed to meet the changing needs of all students. Of particular significance is the development of the sixth form in collaboration with three other local schools. All the key issues from the previous inspection have been addressed.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### Year 11 and 13 results

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

*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.*

Test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved. Unvalidated results for 2004 are well above average. Achievement is very good. The standards that students achieve are very good in art, drama, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages. They are good in all other subjects except design and technology, history and physical education. In these subjects, achievement is satisfactory. GCSE results have steadily improved since 2001 and unvalidated results in 2004 are above average. Achievement is very good. Students do exceptionally well in art, music and drama, reflecting the school's strengths in these areas and its designation as a media arts college. The standards achieved in Years 10 and 11 are very good in art, music, drama, business education, modern foreign languages and religious education. They are good in English, science, textiles and graphics and history. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, ICT and geography. Students of all abilities achieve very well in the sixth form. Results in business studies are outstanding. The standards achieved in the sixth form in

\* This grade is based on the 2004 GCSE results and equivalent qualifications that have not been nationally validated.

\*\* This grade is based on the 2004 A/AS level and VCE results that have not been nationally validated.

the subjects inspected are very good in English, mathematics, chemistry, art and design, design and technology, history and music and good in health and social care.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **very good**. Most students have very good attitudes towards learning and want to do well at school. All students feel they belong and respond positively to the school's high expectations. Harmonious relationships exist among students and with the staff. Many students show a mature sense of social responsibility. Attendance and punctuality are good because students are given every incentive to be in school and most importantly they like coming. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**.

Teachers use their very good subject knowledge in most lessons to plan activities that interest and capture students' imagination. Students enjoy learning and have very good working relationships with their teachers. The curriculum is very good because it is well planned to meet the needs of all students. Extra-curricular activities are excellent. Students enjoy very good care, guidance and support based on very good monitoring of their progress by teachers and their tutors. Time spent with tutors in the morning is not always used as well as it could be. The school has very good links with parents, other schools and colleges and the community.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good**. Both are **very effective**. The work of the governing body is **very good**.

The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has secured the commitment of the whole community to achieving high standards. Self-evaluation is very well developed so the school knows its strengths and weaknesses. Where there are weaknesses in departments, both senior and middle leaders are working together to bring about improvement. The continuous development of the curriculum and teaching enables students to achieve their potential. Prudent financial planning and expert financial management ensure that the school makes best use of its financial resources. There is evidence that the low income the school receives restricts expenditure on accommodation and resources. Governors are knowledgeable and committed, but do not as yet fully meet statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship and opportunities for all students to experience a religious education course in the sixth form. They are innovative in the way they work with the headship team.

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

Parents and students rate the school highly. They recognise skilful teaching that promotes diligence and high standards of work and behaviour. They praise the harmonious atmosphere in school and are confident about the school's insistence on correct conduct. Students say that there is some bullying in the school. Inspectors found that the school ensures that the very occasional instance of bullying is very well managed. Parents and students are very confident in the school's leadership and value their involvement in the school's future development.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Use the school's very effective management systems and procedures to focus on making the less successful departments as good as the rest;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Make sure that all tutors use the time at the start of the day with their tutor group to fulfil the governors' expectations of a daily act of collective worship.

## SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Students in the sixth form achieve **very well**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Leadership and management are **excellent**. The curriculum provided across the consortium of schools is **very cost effective**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The visionary leadership of the headteacher, the curriculum deputy and the head of sixth form, and the meticulous management of the head of the sixth form, ensure that students achieve very well;
- Students of all abilities in the sixth form achieve very well. Those on advanced courses are working at well above average standards in most of the subjects inspected;
- Teachers share their expertise and passion for their subjects with students so that individual students develop their talents and abilities to the full;
- Students enjoy very positive and mature relationships with their teachers and become exceptionally confident and independent learners;
- Sixth-form students are very involved in the life and work of the school and are excellent role-models for younger students;
- By working with other local schools with post-16 students, the school provides a very good curriculum that meets the needs of all students. Some students do not have the opportunity to take a course in religious studies.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>English</b> is <b>very good</b> . Results are above average and students achieve very well. Very good teaching helps students to develop their own opinions in discussion and writing.
Mathematics	<b>Mathematics</b> is <b>very good</b> . Results are well above average and students achieve very well. Assessment is very good and helps students to know what they understand and what they need to improve.
Science	<b>Chemistry</b> is <b>good</b> . Well-qualified and experienced teachers ensure students achieve good results. Assessment is very good and tells students what they need to do to improve. Not enough use is made of ICT in lessons.
Humanities	<b>History</b> is <b>very good</b> . Teaching is very good. This, along with students' very positive attitudes, leads to independent learners who achieve very well.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Design and technology</b> is <b>very good</b> . Very good teaching promotes independent learning and the development of students' own ideas. Assessment is very good and is supporting students' very good achievement.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Music technology</b> and <b>art and design</b> are <b>very good</b> . Music is very popular with students. Teaching is very good and leads to highly motivated students. Very good teaching and assessment in art ensure that students fulfil their potential. Art provides very rich and diverse opportunities, including the use of computer technology. In music there are not enough computers.



Business	<b>Excellent.</b> Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) results are very high. Students achieve well because of very good teaching. The department is committed to achieving the highest standards.
Health and social care	<b>Good.</b> VCE results are improving and students achieve well. Good links with care organisations ensure students have very good opportunities for work experience.

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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**

Advice, guidance and support are **very good**.

There is a very good programme of support and guidance for sixth-form students that begins in Year 11 and continues through to the end of Year 13. Subject teachers and tutors keep a very close watch on the way students are progressing. Teachers review each student's performance every half-term and make written recommendations about how they can improve. They also keep in good contact with parents, which is unusual in the sixth form, but very supportive of students and appreciated by parents. Students are encouraged to be independent learners, which is good preparation for higher education. They thrive on opportunities to take responsibility as senior members of the school community and are very good role-models for younger students. They have very good help and support from their tutors and the Connexions service, whether they intend to go into higher education or into employment. They provide very good guidance on preparing applications to universities, and practice of interview techniques.

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

The leadership of the sixth form is **excellent**.

The head of sixth form, with the full support of the headteacher and the headship team, is focused on making the sixth form into one of the best. He has an excellent understanding of the local and national agenda for 16 to 19 education and uses this to inform his work. He ensures that students benefit from being in an 11 to 18 school by involving students in the life and work of the sixth form and the main school. Staff value all students and recognise their achievements whatever their capabilities. They insist on high standards, for example, on regular attendance. Management is exceptionally good. Standards are monitored constantly. Consortium arrangements are managed exceptionally well to the benefit of students and staff. The four schools have shared procedures, for instance, for checking teaching and the content of the courses they teach. The school maintains excellent relationships with these partner schools. School and sixth-form leadership is innovative and energetic in its search for continuous expansion of courses and opportunities for students.

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

Students rate the sixth form very highly. They applaud the very good teaching, recognising the impact this has on their work and their personal development. They praise particularly the help they get with their studies and with choosing their career routes. They describe the school as one of opportunity where they can achieve whatever they want to. They comment that the school encourages them to find and pursue their dreams and passions.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Achievement is **very good** in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, standards in most subjects are **above average**. In English, mathematics and science they are **well above average**. By the end of Year 11, standards are **above average**. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is **very good**. In the sixth form, standards are **above average** and achievement is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved. Unvalidated results for 2004 are well above average.
- GCSE results have been steadily improving since 2001 and unvalidated results in 2004 are above average.
- The school does all it can to make sure that all students complete examination courses and are accredited for their work.
- Students do exceptionally well in art, music and drama, reflecting the school's strengths in these areas and its designation as a media arts college.
- Students of all abilities in the sixth form achieve very well. Those on advanced courses are working at well above average standards in most of the subjects inspected.

#### Commentary

##### Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.4 (33.1)	N/A (33.4)
Mathematics	37.3 (37.1)	N/A (35.4)
Science	36.3 (35.6)	N/A (33.6)

*There were 280 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. When students join the school their standard of work is broadly average. Students do very well to reach well above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9. Their success in these subjects provides a very firm foundation for their future examination work. In 2004, results further improved and unvalidated results, as well as being well above average, are very high when compared to similar schools. They are also high in the local education authority rankings, especially for English and science. These results show an increase in the proportion of students gaining the nationally expected level and an increase in the proportion gaining the higher levels. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs achieve very well, as do students whose heritage language is not English. The school has a small number of students from traveller families and they achieve well because the school works hard to help them participate in school life.
2. The standards that students achieve are very good in English, mathematics, science, art, drama, ICT and modern foreign languages. They are good in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology, history and physical education. In these subjects, achievement is satisfactory. In design and technology there have been a number of changes in the department and there are signs that standards are improving. In history, teaching is not

as good as it is in Years 10 and 11. In physical education, not enough attention has been given to the quality of the work that students produce in lessons.

## Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	52 (48)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (87)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.8 (35.4)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 275 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- GCSE results in 2004 were above average and in line with results in similar schools. Girls did slightly better than boys. Both boys and girls did better than boys and girls nationally. The school has done an extensive analysis of 2004 results that shows very little difference between the results of boys and girls in most subjects. Girls did better than boys in ICT and music only. In 2004, the school was particularly proud that nearly all its students gained five or more GCSEs with grades A\*-G, including its traveller students. Students with special educational needs achieved very well, with some getting five or more GCSEs with grades A\*-C. In 2004, results improved significantly in business education and were quite outstanding. Results also improved in English literature, science, expressive arts, media studies, French, music and physical education and were average or better. In all other subjects, unvalidated results are close to average, except for those in German and the resistant materials aspect of design and technology. In resistant materials, results were below average and achievement unsatisfactory, as it was in 2003.
- The standards achieved in Years 10 and 11 are very good in art, music, drama, business education, modern foreign languages and religious education. They are good in English, science, textiles and graphics and history. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, ICT and geography. In mathematics, examination results indicate satisfactory achievement, but the standards achieved by the current Year 11 are good. In ICT, Year 11 students have not experienced a separate taught course for the full three years lower down the school. In geography, a number of students, despite support for coursework, do not complete it to the standard required.
- Standards in literacy and numeracy are good throughout the school. This enables students to learn effectively in other subjects. ICT skills are good in Years 7 to 9 and are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The use of ICT in art, drama and music is very good and extends the creativity of students.

## Sixth form

- GCE and AVCE results overall were average in 2003, but the proportion of students gaining the higher grades was below average, particularly for male students. In 2004, results were average, but show improvement over the last five years. In 2004 there was an increase in the proportion of students gaining the higher grades. Results in individual subjects vary each year, affected by the prior attainment and experience of students. The school already has data,

analysed and produced by a national company, that indicates very good achievement overall by students who completed their two-year advanced courses and the two-year AVCE in business in 2004. The inspection focused on nine subjects in the sixth form. Standards of work seen are well above expectations in business, mathematics and design technology and students achieve very well in these subjects. Standards are above expectations in English, art, history and music and students also achieve very well. Standards are as expected in chemistry and on the AVCE health and social care course and the achievement of these students is good. The success of students on all these courses is due to good or very good teaching and very positive and mature attitudes of students.

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

Students' attendance and punctuality are **good**. They have **very good** attitudes towards school activities and behave **very well**. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's strong ethos promotes very good relationships.
- Students take a pride in their school and enjoy all it offers for their personal development.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good.
- Students show increased maturity, sensitivity and respect for each other.
- Attendance is good because students are given every incentive to be in school, and like coming.

### Commentary

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.7	School data:	0.7
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.*

- Attendance and punctuality are good and improving throughout the school. Unauthorised absence is low. Good attendance is very well promoted and procedures for dealing with absence are very thorough and effective.
- Most students have very good attitudes towards learning and want to do well at school. The high level of pastoral support, with its emphasis on inclusion, ensures that all students feel they belong and respond positively to the school's high expectations for their conduct and attitude to work. Harmonious relationships exist among students and between students and staff. Many students show a mature sense of social responsibility.
- The school is an orderly community in which staff and students show each other courtesy and consideration and politeness to visitors. High standards of conduct are achieved by consistent application of the school's rigorous behaviour policy and by rewarding students for observing it. As a result, behaviour in lessons is very good and the same responsible conduct is shown around the school, even on narrow corridors and cramped staircases. At breaks and lunchtimes, students socialise well, without any conflict or unduly boisterous behaviour. Their manners in the dining room are civilised and relaxed, despite limited space.
- Staff take concerted action to prevent any form of bullying, creating a climate in which students are not prepared to tolerate any form of harassment or racism. Occasional incidents are dealt with immediately and effectively. Great care is taken to meet the needs of students from ethnic minorities and travellers, so that they integrate well in the life of the school.

11. The number of fixed-term exclusions is low and there have only been two permanent exclusions in the last two years. The school works extremely hard with individuals to keep them in school. It has excellent procedures and support systems for dealing with the few students whose behaviour gives cause for concern, and acts quickly to prevent any escalation of misbehaviour that might lead to exclusion.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1568	76	
White – any other White background	4		
Mixed – White and Asian	1		
Mixed – any other mixed background	1		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5		
Black or Black British – African	11	1	
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3		
Chinese	4		
Any other ethnic group	24	7	
No ethnic group recorded	9		

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

12. The school promotes the personal development of students very well, assisting them to become mature, responsible and informed young citizens. Students' spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Moral, social and cultural development is very good. Time for religious education has improved in Years 10 and 11, allowing it to make a full contribution to spiritual and moral education. Moral issues are raised in many other subjects. As a result, students develop strong personal values and a keen sense of right and wrong. The lack of a daily act of collective worship weakens this provision. Weekly assemblies promote school values effectively. 'Thought for the Week' provides tutors with good ideas for a morning meditation, but its implementation is inconsistent. Social education and citizenship programmes equip students to play an active role in their community. Many are involved in fundraising for charities. Multicultural education is well promoted through most subjects. Third World issues are covered well in English and citizenship and students are made aware of the contributions other cultures make to life in modern Britain.

## Sixth form

13. Personal development in the sixth form is very good. Students are delighted with the stimulating atmosphere of the sixth form, enjoying the rich programme of academic, social and

cultural experiences it provides. Teachers inspire a passion for their subjects in them and a confidence in learning for themselves. As a result, students mature, and are well prepared for higher education and life after school. Students have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, such as involvement in the school council, attachment to Year 7 tutor groups, involvement in the anti-bullying campaign and assistance with extra-curricular activities. They fulfil these positions responsibly and provide superb role-models for younger students. Two-thirds of students continue religious studies through general studies courses on culture and morality, but its optional status means that statutory requirements are not being met.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. The curriculum is **very good**. The care, guidance and support of students are **very good**. The school's links with parents are **very good**. Links with the community, business and other schools and colleges are **very good**.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good** in all years. Assessment of students' work is **good** in Years 7 to 11 and **very good** in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge in most lessons to plan activities that interest and capture students' imagination.
- The passion and enthusiasm of teachers in the sixth form are transmitted to their students.
- Students enjoy learning and behave very well in class, even when teaching is occasionally dull and unimaginative.
- Very good working relationships exist between students and their teachers.
- Assessment is used constructively by all subjects in the sixth form and involves students in evaluating their work.
- Some departments use comprehensive assessment systems to track students' progress very effectively, but not all departments do this.

### Commentary

14. The development of teaching and learning is an important focus for the school. While the proportion of satisfactory teaching remains the same as it was at the previous inspection, the proportion of very good or excellent teaching has increased considerably.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 161 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (6)	57 (35)	59 (37)	29 (18)	7 (4)	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 35 lessons which were observed in the sixth form.*

15. Most subjects are effectively using good practice identified in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. This was evident especially in English, mathematics and science lessons. In these subjects, teachers' very good subject knowledge, the imaginative methods and the range of activities they use to make lessons interesting keep all learners, including those with special educational needs and those whose heritage language is not English, working at or near their

capacity. A few individual teachers do not, however, use these strategies with as much confidence in lessons in Years 10 and 11. When this happens, teaching is not as exciting, but is linked closely to examination requirements.

16. Very good working relationships, teachers' understanding of how students learn and students' own very good behaviour are key features in the best lessons. Students enjoy learning and enjoy the challenge created for them, especially through high-quality questioning, where students develop their own ideas and understanding of different concepts. Key features of weaker lessons are that teachers talk for too long, unaware of students' drifting attention, or provide answers for them too quickly. Students who have special educational needs benefit from lessons that are planned effectively. This is because teachers and support staff know their students well and use individual educational plans effectively. They are reviewed regularly, which means that gains in learning can be reflected in new targets for these students. In a very small number of lessons in design and technology, history, mathematics and physical education, teaching was unsatisfactory. The weaknesses in these lessons relate to a lack of challenge or weak management of students' behaviour.
17. Assessment of students' work is good and for those studying business education and modern foreign language lessons it is excellent. Monitoring in these subjects is based on regular testing with a database used to track achievement and monitor where students are not doing so well. There is regular feedback in lessons so students know exactly how to improve their work and reach higher grades. The school sets targets for students to reach in different subjects at the end of Years 9 and 11. Most departments measure how well students are doing in their subjects. This high-quality assessment of students' work is not common in all subjects. Design and technology, history, geography and physical education do not yet give students the detail about how to improve that they receive in other subjects.

### Sixth form

18. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. Several excellent lessons were observed. In most lessons, very good subject knowledge, challenge and high expectations of teachers, combined with the very good attitudes of the students, mean that students are engrossed in their learning. The length of some lessons is a positive impact on students' learning as it gives them long enough, especially in practical subjects, to be fully immersed in a topic and time to explore and develop their initial ideas. Very good use is made of probing questions so that students learn to think for themselves and are guided towards learning independently. Students' work is marked carefully and constructively. For example, in business education and mathematics, assessment is excellent. Students are involved thoroughly in assessing their work and then setting themselves new targets for their next lesson. This enables them to develop their critical and analytical skills.

### The curriculum

The school provides a **very good** curriculum. Opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular activities are **very good**. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum enables all students from different groups, backgrounds and abilities to learn and to develop very well as individuals.
- Links with other local schools and colleges enable the school to provide an extensive range of academic and vocational courses from the age of 14 onwards.
- Excellent extra-curricular opportunities widen students' experiences and support learning and personal development.
- The provision for all students with special educational needs is very good, especially in raising confidence and self-esteem through success.
- Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, but there are shortfalls in resources and areas where accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

19. The school provides a very good curriculum that gives students of all abilities a broad range of opportunities and meets statutory requirements. There are very good approaches to improving literacy and numeracy skills for students with special educational needs. The learning and transition centre meets individual needs very well through individual attention and group work. A small group established to give students opportunities to improve their speaking and listening skills and to develop confidence is very successful. This is a very inclusive school that provides very well for a full range of needs. The provision for students for whom English is not their first language is excellent, as is the provision for students from a traveller background. There is a policy for gifted and talented students in the school for whom support and extension opportunities are good.
20. Students in Years 7 to 9 benefit now from having separate ICT lessons. Some also study two modern foreign languages. In Years 10 and 11, valuable college links have a very good impact on preparing students for future education, training and employment. The curriculum, including off-site provision, is frequently monitored to make sure it is meeting the changing needs of students.
21. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. A successful careers education programme begins in Year 7. It is delivered in partnership with Connexions, includes very effective work experience and prepares students well for later life. Good links with partner primary schools, particularly in English, mathematics, science and ICT, and very good links with local colleges ensure there is progression in students' learning.
22. The taught curriculum is made richer by an excellent programme for extra-curricular activities. These are very strong in music, drama and physical education, but also include other subjects. Students frequently use the library at lunchtime and after school. There are many visits arranged, including visits to theatres, art galleries and museums and a residential trip to France, for example. Participation rates in art, music, sport and drama are high.
23. Overall, staffing is good. Governors have dealt with a small number of staffing issues in the past and some new heads of faculty are now in place. The school has a very well-qualified and experienced staff, skilled at meeting the diverse needs of students and of the curriculum. There is, however, a lack of technical support for music. Resources are satisfactory, but a low income per student makes it difficult to buy the resources necessary. The number of texts in the library is inadequate and in a number of subjects there is a need for more ICT equipment. In some subjects, computers are outdated and need replacing. Accommodation overall is satisfactory. While there are sufficient classrooms, many are small and corridors are narrow. The dining room is not big enough to accommodate the number of students who use it and they have to queue outside. Social areas are limited. Parents expressed concern about students having to carry heavy bags, but there is no space in the school for students to have lockers. The nature and fabric of the buildings create problems in maintaining a sound, clean learning environment. There is a planned programme of refurbishment and the school is doing what it can to improve certain areas.

## Sixth form

24. The school provides an excellent range of courses at all levels. The head of sixth form makes very good use of data to develop the provision to match the aspirations and needs of all students. The curriculum is enriched through the East Riding south consortium arrangements with three other schools. The joint planning and time tabling across the consortium is very successful. Students say they have opportunities to do whatever courses they want to do to suit their abilities and career plans. Students like the way the curriculum is blocked into half-day sessions. Not only does this ease the problem of transport between the schools, it gives students better opportunities to become immersed in their subjects and to study in depth.



There is a very wide range of enrichment activities both within and outside school. The provision for religious education is not available to all students.

### Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure students' care, welfare and safety are **very good**. The school provides **very good** support and guidance and involves students **very well** in its work and development.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures for ensuring students' well-being are very effective.
- Very good arrangements with feeder schools help students to settle quickly into Year 7.
- Links between subject and pastoral staff underpin very good monitoring of progress and personal development.
- Students receive very good advice to help them with choices of subjects and careers, but time with tutors in a morning is not always used well.
- Students have very good opportunities to express their views, and feel that their views are valued.
- In the sixth form, students benefit from very good opportunities for personal development and receive very good advice on the next stage of education or employment.

### Commentary

25. The school ensures the welfare and safety of all its students very effectively. Very effective child-protection arrangements and procedures for risk assessments are reviewed regularly. The school is currently preparing a submission for a Healthy Schools Award. Students learn about safety in the workplace during well-planned and rigorously monitored work placements. Pastoral links with feeder schools are well established. Consequently, students arriving in Year 7 settle very quickly. They appreciate the 'buddy' system operated by Year 13 students that continues throughout their first year. These senior students also run an anti-bullying club, and a lunchtime club for vulnerable students. A full-time first-aider effectively supplements the weekly visits of a school nurse. Procedures for monitoring attendance are very thorough. The very low level of exclusions shows the school's commitment to keeping as many students as possible in education.
26. Great attention is paid to monitoring academic progress and personal development. Heads of year meet regularly with form tutors to discuss individual students, especially those causing concern. They make excellent use of a range of external agencies to address identified needs. Very good systems enable pastoral staff to have an overview of progress in subjects, and to intervene where there is underachievement. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme contributes significantly to students' welfare, for example in providing sex education and education on solvent abuse as well as careers education. All groups of students are very well supported, including those with special educational needs, travellers, and those whose heritage language is not English. Although subject provision for gifted and talented students is not co-ordinated, these students receive very good opportunities to develop their strengths in many subjects.
27. Students are given very good advice in Years 9 and 11 on the subjects they can choose for the next stage of education. Year 11 students feel that they would benefit by being provided with a summary of coursework deadlines to help them organise their workload. Careers education features in Years 7 and 8. Representatives of the school's career partner, Connexions, are very active in school and at parents' consultation evenings and careers fairs. They provide a very valuable service.
28. All students feel that they are listened to and have an adult to confide in. Most get on well with their form tutor, but in some cases, the time spent with form tutors at the start of the day is not well used. The school has unusually good arrangements for collecting students' views, for

example through questionnaires. Members of the school council confirm that their opinions and suggestions are taken seriously.

### **Sixth form**

29. A clearly defined programme of support and guidance for sixth-form students begins as soon as they declare their intentions in Year 11. Academic progress is very well monitored, first at subject level through individual discussion and review, and by pastoral staff, who have a very good overview. High-quality feedback gives students clear guidance on how to improve. Students have very good opportunities for personal development. They are encouraged towards independent learning in most subjects, and thrive on opportunities to take responsibility as senior members of the school community. Year 13 students, for example, have taken the initiative in creating the anti-bullying club and the 'buddy' system for younger students. They can participate in a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which broaden their outlook and experience of community. Connexions continues to provide a very effective service for them, whether they intend to go into higher education or into employment. Together with pastoral staff, they provide very good guidance on preparing applications to universities, and practice of interview techniques.

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

The school has **very good** links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges.

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

- Excellent links with consortium schools greatly enhance many aspects of school life.
- The school works very effectively with parents to support students' learning and well-being.
- The school is outward looking, and has very productive links with the community.
- The school values, and students benefit from, the strong links it has with other schools and colleges.

#### **Commentary**

30. The school has exceptionally close working partnerships with three other local schools through the East Riding consortium. These arrangements create a rich choice of courses for students in the sixth form. Students rate the consortium highly because of the many additional activities it offers. They value the experience it provides for them to meet and work with other students, a transition between a single school and university. Teachers value the consortium because of the close links it provides with other specialists. They share schemes of work and procedures for checking their work. This fosters significant professional development within and across the four schools.
31. Staff work very hard and effectively to include parents in their child's education. Staff know students and their families very well and involve parents quickly when any intervention is necessary. The school surveys parental opinion regularly. Results and school responses are fed back to the Parent School Association. This ensures that parents' views are included in future school development planning. Parents report that any concerns are handled very effectively using correct procedures. Staff communicate particularly carefully with parents of children who have any special educational or additional need, and with the traveller families. The school arranges very effective support from a wide range of agencies, and ensures that parents are partners in this collaboration. Parents are therefore very confident that the school meets their child's needs and value the support given. This very good practice continues into the sixth form, as the school believes that the partnership with parents should not end when students reach 16 years of age. The school provides very good general information for parents. The prospectus is an attractive and informative document. Annual reports are good. Teachers provide good detail about students' performance, particularly in terms of the efforts made by students and their attitude to lessons. Most reports also include useful suggestions

for securing further improvement. Parents value the additional interim reports, which allow them to check their child's performance during the year.

32. The school pursues its links with the community routinely and enthusiastically. Twenty-five different music and drama productions entice the local community into the school. The school now has a history of annual representation at the Edinburgh Festival. This involvement fosters students' theatrical talents, their aspirations and their personal development. An extremely effective youth service is on site. Their staff work in complete harmony with the school, promoting activities and providing support for many students.
33. The school is committed to working in partnership with other schools and colleges. Staff are implementing enthusiastically the plans to build on existing links with primary schools through the very recently acquired specialist school status. Additional funds enable staff to share their expertise in a wider selection of subjects and activities. Parents praise the good arrangements for students' transfer from primary schools. The requirements of potential students with special or additional needs are discussed with school staff as early as Year 5. Students participating in college courses are very positive about the extensive range of different activities provided, and about the chance to meet students from other schools.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**. The leadership and management of the sixth form are **excellent**. The governance of the school is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The inspiring leadership of the headteacher secures the commitment of the whole community to achieving high standards.
- The sixth form has some outstanding features because of the excellence of its leadership and management.
- School leadership motivates staff very effectively and creates successful teams.
- Self-evaluation is very well developed so the school knows its strengths and weaknesses.
- The continuous development of the curriculum and teaching enables students to achieve their potential.
- Prudent financial planning and expert financial management ensures that the school provides very good value for money.

### Commentary

34. Students, staff, parents and governors speak with one voice when they describe the work of the headteacher. They value his pragmatic, wise, prudent and modest style. He ensures that the school's primary emphasis is on the achievement of the individual. He combines clarity of vision with a keen grasp of the national education agenda and initiatives, and an acute awareness of his own school. This enables him to place the school in the very best position to move forward on many fronts. He has developed a comprehensive and systematic approach to the involvement of everyone, particularly the students. The recent acquisition of media arts status has enhanced the staff's enthusiasm for continuous school improvement.
35. Members of the leadership team support and challenge staff to implement the school's vision and to work for improvement. Line management is strong and promotes high expectations of middle leaders to which all respond. Pastoral leadership is very effective and a consistent approach ensures a high quality of care for all students. Several faculty and department leaders are new. Their work is already improving the success of their departments, such as design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education.

36. The headship team evaluates the school's performance very effectively through the extensive analysis of data. This leads to confident self-evaluation in faculties and subjects and promotes improvement. Very clear links exist between departmental and whole-school priorities. Strategic planning is exceptionally good, and focuses sharply on the school's aims and on how the school will achieve what it determines to be characteristics of success. Many faculties and aspects of school life have improved because of the development of consistent whole-school policy and practice.
37. The school is genuinely committed to staff development. Budget constraints have limited some opportunities, but the school has continued with a programme using its own resources. Exceptionally well-managed consortium links enable the school to share staffing and many training activities. The school provides very good support for newly qualified and student teachers, and makes good use of their skills and enthusiasm. These features exemplify the school's commitment to constant improvement in the curriculum and teaching. Most managers make good use of the school's very effective systems, and achieve a high level of consistency within departments. The school works tenaciously to support improvement in the few departments where practice is below par. New, but experienced, teachers comment that they settle well because existing staff are very supportive. However, there is no formal induction programme.
38. The school runs exceptionally well on a day-to-day basis. Administration procedures are excellent, including the prudent management of finance. The school makes informed decisions about school priorities and applies value for money principles exceptionally well. Income per student is low and in order to meet needs, the school is exceptionally alert to, and proficient in, accessing grants and other financial help. Essential building alterations and resource increases account for the reduction in the balance for last year and the reserve for this year.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£5,017,557	Balance from previous year	£158,836
Total expenditure	£5,091,710	Balance carried forward to the next	£84,683
Expenditure per pupil	£3228.73		

39. Governors are committed to the school's continued improvement and ensure that developments are closely monitored. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a clear vision for its future direction. They use this sensitively to support improvement planning, particularly through the recently established strategic group. They take their own training and development very seriously and work closely with the governing bodies of the other three consortium schools. They have tried to ensure that the school has a daily act of collective worship through activities in tutor time, but practice is inconsistent. In the sixth form, many students take courses with a religious or ethical dimension, but this does not apply to all.

## Sixth form

40. Excellent leadership of the sixth form is focused on raising standards and involving students in the life and work of the sixth form and the school. Staff value all students and recognise their achievements whatever their capabilities. This promotes outstandingly high levels of loyalty

from students. Staff insist on high standards, for example, on regular attendance. Management is exceptionally good. Standards are monitored constantly. Teachers review each student's performance every term and make written recommendations about how to raise standards. Systematic presentation of information to parents promotes parental involvement. Consortium arrangements are managed exceptionally well to the benefit of students and staff. The schools have shared procedures, for instance, for checking the teaching in lessons and the content of the courses they teach. The school maintains excellent relationships with these partner schools. School and sixth-form leadership is innovative and energetic in its search for continuous expansion of courses and opportunities for students. The sixth form is very cost effective.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning**

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

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

- The co-ordinator uses his wide range of experience and knowledge very well to disseminate work-related learning across most subjects.
- The careers education programme is well developed with very good links to the Connexions service.
- There is a very well-planned work experience programme for Year 10 students.
- There is a good range of vocational subjects both in school and at local colleges.
- Some students take extended placements, which enhance their personal and social skills.

### **Commentary**

41. The school has made a very good start in implementing work-related learning. The co-ordinator has a wealth of experience in managing careers education and work experience in the school. Subjects plan a growing range of good opportunities for students to develop knowledge of different careers and practice in the world of work.
42. There is a wide range of vocational courses for students in Years 10 and 11. Applied vocational GCSEs in health and social care, ICT and science have been introduced, and applied engineering students spend half their lessons with the Humberside Engineering Training Association. Within the national increased flexibility programme, students can select to study from a good range of national vocational qualifications at a local college, for example in construction, hair and beauty, and motor vehicle maintenance.
43. There are very good links with the Connexions service, who staff an office within school for most of the week. Careers interviews with students are initiated by teaching staff or the students themselves, so students have good support and guidance to help them plan for a successful future career.
44. There is a well-planned careers education programme in personal, social, health and citizenship education. Students in Years 7 and 8 start careers planning through improved self-awareness, knowledge of where they can get help and information and action planning. Year 9 students are encouraged to consider choices and examination options carefully. In Year 11, students prepare CVs and build on their self-presentation skills for their Progress File.

45. Year 10 students are very well prepared for their two-week work experience. The logbooks and work folders provided by the Humberside Education Business Links organisation help students to build a record of their communication and employability skills. Debriefing is equally effective and all students have an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned after their placement. A small number of Year 11 students with low self-esteem or behavioural problems can spend one or two days a week working in a company on an extended work placement. This has a noticeable improvement on their attitudes and behaviour.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Students achieve very well and there was a considerable improvement in results in the Year 9 tests in 2004.
- Very good teaching ensures that a wide range of activities meets the different needs of all students.
- Students learn in a supportive atmosphere that engenders confidence and a willingness to participate.
- Very good leadership and management of the department have ensured a consistent focus on priorities.
- Too much ground is covered in some lessons so there is insufficient time for full consolidation of learning.

##### **Commentary**

46. Results in 2003 in Year 9 tests were average. Unconfirmed results for 2004 show a great improvement and standards are very high. Work seen during the inspection is well above national expectations and reflects the very good achievement of pupils. GCSE results in English language and literature in 2003 were above average. Although unconfirmed language results for 2004 have dropped to below average, the standard of work seen in language during the inspection is above expectations and in literature is well above. Achievement of Year 11 pupils is good as they were at average levels in Year 9. Throughout the school, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve equally well.
47. By Year 9, pupils speak articulately and confidently in paired, small group and whole-class discussions. The majority read fluently and identify important aspects of style and effect in their reading. They write for a range of purposes using different forms. By Year 11, pupils adapt their speech according to the situation. The most successful students identify authors' intentions and how they influence their readers. The majority of students organise extended writing coherently and sustain arguments and ideas. Only the very weakest students do not have sufficient control over language to communicate well in writing.
48. Students' success in English is a result of very good teaching and learning. It is slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. A very positive feature is the very good range of activities in lessons. Such activities take account of the different abilities and aptitudes of students and also incorporate different styles of learning. Teachers question their students skilfully to ensure wide involvement by students of all abilities. Lessons are well structured and build carefully upon prior learning. A good degree of challenge is present in most lessons and even where the work is very demanding, the very good relationships between teachers and students ensure that students are confident about attempting assignments. In Years 10 and 11, students are well informed about examination criteria and how to improve their work. In some lessons, too much ground is covered, which leaves little time for consolidation of learning. Marking is often very good with succinct and focussed guidance, but there is some variability in the written feedback. Students respond to the very good teaching with evident enjoyment of the subject and are keen to participate in lessons.

49. The curriculum is very comprehensive and goes beyond the confines of examination syllabuses. Social, moral and cultural issues are thoroughly addressed and play an important part in allowing students to develop their own thoughts and values. Good opportunities for using ICT allow students both to improve presentational skills and also understand how commercial publications target their readership. The department has very successfully implemented the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. It has used it to focus on particular areas of teaching and learning. Guided group reading and writing now receive increased and effective attention.
50. Leadership and management of English are very good. The impact of recent long-term absences of teachers has been minimised. Analysis of the performance of students has been thoughtful and the whole department takes the same view of where best to direct future initiatives. Teachers enjoy teaching English, are enthusiastic about trying new ideas and are well supported at all times. The previous inspection report identified a small number of concerns about teaching and learning, which have all been completely addressed.

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

51. Standards of literacy are good and support learning across the curriculum. The provision for the development of literacy and language skills is good. Successful whole-school training was based on an audit of existing practice and standards. Further training has focussed effectively on how teaching styles and formative assessment should address literacy issues. The overall teaching of literacy in different departments is good. In business studies and art there is a very productive emphasis on accurate use of vocabulary. Modern foreign languages effectively develop students' abilities to analyse language structures. Students with special educational needs receive very good, carefully structured language support. In history and geography, the teaching of literacy is satisfactory, but opportunities to improve skills are missed.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

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

- GCSE results were above average in 2003, and improved further in 2004.
- Very positive attitudes and very good behaviour help students to achieve very well throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Outstanding subject knowledge and high expectations underpin very good teaching.
- Excellent leadership and management promote effective teamwork, which is raising standards.
- Excellent assessment procedures ensure that students understand and contribute to their targets and progress.
- In Years 8 and 9, students studying two languages have less time for the two individual languages, which slows progress by restricting the range of learning experiences.

### **Commentary**

52. Teachers' assessments show a steadily rising trend in standards at the end of Year 9. Standards reported in 2003 were average, but in 2004 these assessments significantly improved. Girls did better than boys by greater than the national margin. GCSE results in French were above average in 2003 and improved in 2004 because of a significant improvement by boys. Results in German were below average, largely because instability in staffing affected continuity in learning. Students exceed expectations in French by the end of Year 9. Students beginning German in Year 8 reach average standards in Year 9. In view of the small amount of time for individual languages, this represents very good achievement in both languages. The emphasis on learning language structures, added to steady acquisition of vocabulary, ensures that all students understand key details in what they hear and read. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, benefit from very good support. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, with fairly



equal numbers in top sets. In Year 11, and particularly in Year 10, standards are well above expectations, and students continue to achieve very well in both French and German. Most students speak and write confidently. Lower attainers are well supported by the structure of written coursework, but struggle to convey meaning.

53. Teaching and learning are very good. In Years 10 and 11, much is excellent. Teachers' outstanding subject knowledge includes very thorough knowledge of national criteria, which underpins very good planning and high expectations. Therefore, students are constantly challenged through varied and engaging tasks that have a clear purpose. Excellent assessment in lessons supplements well-developed systems, which ensure that students are aware of progress towards their targets, and of how to reach the next stages. Constructive marking further supports this. In Years 8 and 9, students studying two languages make very good progress in limited time because of the quality of teaching, although some desirable learning experiences are squeezed out. In all years, relationships are very good, students enjoy learning languages, and their behaviour and attitudes contribute significantly to their progress because they want to learn. They enjoy opportunities to extend themselves in pair work, coursework and lessons in ICT rooms. The support given by teaching assistants is very effective. Foreign language assistants are very well used to extend the complexity of students' language. Homework provides good extension opportunities, especially in Years 10 and 11.
54. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of faculty provides an excellent model in her own teaching and transmits her enthusiasm for the subject to students and other staff, so that a very effective and now stable team is successful in raising standards. Planning and policy documents are exemplary and provide excellent guidance and support, for example for a newly qualified teacher. A period of instability in staffing in German was particularly well managed so that students continued to choose to study German, with improved standards evident in Years 10 and 11. The commitment of staff is illustrated by the very good range of residential visits and exchanges, which have considerably enriched the experience of large numbers of students. Despite staffing difficulties, there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection, especially in achievement and teaching, with clear potential to sustain improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Test results at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved. Current Year 9 students are achieving very well.
- Teaching is often very good or excellent, but a minority of teaching fails to engage students sufficiently in their work in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good leadership and management are raising standards.

### **Commentary**

55. In 2004, unconfirmed results for students at the end of Year 9 in national tests are well above average. This continues the steady trend of improvement seen in 2003. Results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 showed very good achievement based on students' prior attainment in their primary schools. Current Year 9 students are achieving very well. As a group, they are working well above expectations. All ability levels are making very good progress because teaching is usually very good and support is targeted where needed. Teaching assistants for students with special educational needs are very effective.
56. In 2004, unconfirmed results at GCSE for students at the end of Year 11 were average. This indicates satisfactory achievement from primary school and from the end-of-Year 9 tests in 2002. This is a dip from GCSE results in 2003, which were above average. Students currently in Year 11 are achieving well. As a year group, they showed good achievement from Years 7

to 9 when they gained above average results in national tests. Students who are from traveller families or who have English as an additional language achieve as well as most other students.

57. Good teaching promotes good learning throughout the school. It is often very good or excellent, particularly in Years 7 to 9, because it engages students much more, using lively starter and recap activities. Only when a teacher failed to manage a class well enough did teaching become unsatisfactory and students were not motivated to learn. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11. It is occasionally very good or excellent. However, when it is satisfactory, there is less emphasis on actively engaging all students from the start and mixing activities to maintain the high levels of enjoyment seen in Years 7 to 9. Generally, teachers plan and assess very well. They work very hard for their students and almost all manage behaviour very well.
58. Leadership and management are very good. The relatively new head of department, who is himself a very good teacher, has created an effective team that is continuing to improve. He is an excellent role-model in terms of hard work and striving for perfection. He supports colleagues very effectively. He knows clearly what is needed to improve motivation into Years 10 and 11. He knows that the department needs to make more use of ICT, but lacks the funds to do this. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Teaching is now often very imaginative and achievement is very good by the end of Year 9.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

59. Students are more than competent to use mathematics in other subjects. This is a significant improvement from the previous inspection. There is a very comprehensive policy to identify where mathematics can be taught in other subjects and to offer clear guidance on the use of graphs and tables as well as methods of calculation. Impressively, Year 10 students in English studying *An Inspector Calls*, drew and interpreted graphs measuring tension in actions and voices compared to events in the play. Students in science interpret graphs effectively, but there is less good use in geography than is often seen. In ICT, spreadsheets are used well to model situations and good use of perspective and scale enhance the standards seen in art. Good understanding of statistical techniques and above average numeracy levels promote very effective learning in the area of business education.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

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

- Very good leadership ensures that the faculty is focused on good teaching and learning and in consequence standards are high.
- Very good use is made of practical work to underpin the learning of scientific principles.
- Very good assessment ensures that students are set motivating targets and are given the guidance on how to achieve them.
- Computers are not used widely enough by students to enhance their learning or present their work.

#### **Commentary**

60. Results at the end of Year 9 have been rising rapidly over recent years and are now well above average. Work seen during the inspection confirms these high standards and all students are achieving very well. This has been mainly due to the science management team, who monitor the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that standards are high and that good practice is spread to all teachers. Consequently, more students are working at higher levels and enjoying science.

61. Standards at the end of Year 11 were above average in 2003 and improved again in 2004. Achievement through the school is very good for all students. Current work and test results show that this improving trend is being maintained. Although the rate of improvement during Years 10 and 11 has not been as rapid as that seen in earlier years, this too is changing as teachers learn from their success in Years 7 to 9 and build on the positive attitudes coming through. More students are reaching the higher levels at the end of Year 9 and the higher GCSE grades. Standards have improved since the previous inspection. Students develop good literacy skills through discussions and the many opportunities to write their own descriptions and conclusions. All students have a very good understanding of scientific method and high attainers evaluate their investigative work with maturity and understanding.
62. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very carefully planned with a range of learning activities. Science is made interesting so that students become more involved in their work. Practical investigations are used very effectively to help students understand scientific principles. Learning guides are provided at the beginning of each topic and are followed up by the use of learning and homework booklets. This system produces a clear focus on learning and assessment and in consequence students have a very good understanding of their levels and how to improve. In the occasional lesson where planning is not so precise, the final check of understanding tends to be too brief. In consequence, teachers cannot be certain that all students have achieved the learning targets. Teachers place high expectations on students with special educational needs and so they too achieve very well. Students get fully involved in the many discussions and develop independence through planning their own experiments in extended coursework investigations. Teachers have greatly improved their use of ICT to make learning easier, but lack of equipment in the laboratories means that students do not get individual access to computers. Tests and homework are carefully marked and graded to give students help in areas of weakness. The working relationships between teachers and students are very good and give students the confidence to join in the frequent discussions and to both ask and answer questions.
63. Leadership and management are very good. This has improved from the previous inspection. Assessment and analysis of results are used effectively to influence curriculum planning and to set motivating targets for all students. The head of faculty uses his science management team extremely well to monitor the quality of teaching and ensure the spread of good practice. This is fully reflected in the consistent quality of teaching observed across a large team of 14 teachers. An innovative course in applied science has been introduced and allows students to undertake work related to their ability and interest. The head of faculty fosters very good teamwork and is providing the leadership necessary to take the faculty forward. The faculty has made very good improvement since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good in all years and students make good progress as they move through the school.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and significantly aid the learning process.
- The work of the department is strongly supported by a very good technical support team.

### **Commentary**

64. The attainment of students when they join the school is in line with expectations. By the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments are above average. This represents very good achievement. Standards in the current Year 9 are above expectations. The trend over the last three years is one of steady and significant improvement. This is largely due to the introduction of separate ICT lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 and a more stable team of specialist ICT teachers. In Year 9,

students work on projects that prepare them for their GCSE courses in Year 10. They are confident users of the school network and the ICT resources. Their skill in the use of presentational software is particularly strong.

65. Results in the short GCSE course in 2003 were disappointing, being well below average. In 2004 they improved significantly to be just above average. Poor performance in 2003 was mainly due to insufficient ICT lessons lower down the school. Students' work observed in Year 11 indicates that standards are in line with expectations, but in Year 10 they are better. This is the first group to have had three years of separate ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9. Students in Year 11 are making satisfactory progress, but the achievement of students in Year 10, in both the short GCSE course and the applied ICT course, is good and indicative of a clear pattern of improvement. All students gain a good understanding of information processing and information systems. Students' ICT skills and confidence in working independently are particularly strong in Year 10 and this bodes well for future GCSE results. Work observed in the newly introduced applied ICT course was well above expectations.
66. Teaching and learning are consistently good in all years. A strong team of specialist teachers teach all lessons. They informally observe each other's teaching and have weekly meetings to address problems and exchange ideas to enhance students' learning. Teachers have high expectations of all students and provide high levels of individual support to ensure they all make good progress. In the best lessons, a wide range of tasks, methods and questioning techniques are used to engage students and check understanding. This results in a good pace of learning. Planning of what is to be taught is thorough and ensures students develop a range of skills to a high standard. Students are encouraged to evaluate and assess their work, and in Years 10 and 11 teachers are particularly conscientious in explaining to students how they can improve their coursework to satisfy the GCSE assessment criteria. In all years, the planning and teaching of lessons ensure that students with special educational needs are fully included and that talented students are stretched.
67. Leadership and management are very good. Monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the department have improved significantly since the last inspection. Data is increasingly used to highlight students' underachievement and to enable teachers to take action to address it. There have been significant revisions to schemes of work and new developments are always being considered. Accommodation and resources within the ICT department are good and create a comfortable learning environment. Students appreciate being able to use the computers during the lunch hour. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Facilities in ICT, particularly the online learning resources, are now much better.

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

68. Provision is satisfactory. The school has a clear strategy to encourage and develop the use of ICT across departments. Students make use of computers extensively for their work in many subjects and their general ICT competency is good. New equipment has been introduced into most curriculum areas and is leading to some good practice by teachers in making illustrated presentations and using specialised software applications. The school's ratio of computers to students is very close to meeting the government's target of 1 to 5. However, some of the computers are old and slow and this hinders the development of full ICT involvement in some subjects such as history and geography. In science and music there are not enough computers for students to use in lessons. Much progress has been made since the last inspection in developing the school's website, network and online learning resources. Excellent work from the network manager and the ICT technicians has enabled the school to put an infrastructure in place to ensure reliability of the network and to support teaching and learning of ICT across the school.

## **HUMANITIES**

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subject well and use resources effectively.
- In some lessons in Years 7 to 9, unsatisfactory teaching leads to insufficient progress.
- Students' personal development is promoted effectively in most lessons.
- Good curriculum enrichment provides students with varied learning opportunities.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to use information and communication technology.

### Commentary

69. Teachers' assessments in June 2004 judged standards to be above average at the end of Year 9. Standards seen during the inspection are broadly average in Year 9 and achievement is satisfactory. 2003 GCSE examination results were broadly average. In 2004, unvalidated results show standards have improved. Standards seen during the inspection are above expectations in Year 11. Achievement by Year 11 is good because the standard of teaching is good in most lessons.
70. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, teachers' secure command of their subject leads them to select resources that create impact. In a lesson about the Polish Ghetto, dramatic film is handled with sensitivity, and students demonstrate considerable maturity in responding. This is an example of very effective learning resulting in very good personal development. However, the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is not applied consistently in all classes in Years 7 to 9. During the inspection, unsatisfactory teaching in Year 7 led to unsatisfactory progress in lessons. There were weaknesses in the balance and pace of these lessons and, occasionally, in the failure to apply established disciplinary procedures. In Years 10 and 11, teachers have a secure command of the subject and involve students actively in learning. In a lesson on the New Deal, the good opportunities for discussion help students to argue different viewpoints and they make good progress in recognising differing political stances. In a few lessons, teachers direct students to what they must do and how they must do it and students do not have sufficient opportunity to develop independent learning skills. Here, groups of average ability students do not make as much progress as the more able do.
71. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear intention to raise standards and competent administration of the department. The head of department is extremely hardworking and he and the leadership team are taking action to improve the overall standard of teaching. Students do not have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology because there are insufficient resources and too few opportunities to use specialist IT rooms. This is a school problem rather than a departmental one. The curriculum is enriched through educational visits to museums and historical locations. Whilst assessment procedures are rigorous and there is systematic monitoring of students' performance, some marking is inconsistent and does not always provide sufficient guidance on how to improve. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students make good progress between entry and Year 9 and achieve well.
- The proportion of students achieving the highest standards in Year 9 is below average.
- The scheme of work provides for a wide variety of activities, but does not meet the National Curriculum requirements for ICT.
- Good subject and syllabus knowledge results in much good teaching, but the best practice is not consistent across the department.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good and result in co-operative attitudes in lessons.

### **Commentary**

72. Standards overall are satisfactory. Students enter the school with variable backgrounds in geography and standards that are below average. An effective scheme of work helps them to make good progress and by Year 9, standards are average. This good achievement extends to all students, including those who have statements of special educational need. GCSE results in 2004 were close to average. Boys achieve less well than girls and in 2004 this difference was greater than the national one, mainly because of some boys' lack of commitment to completing coursework to a satisfactory standard. Students generally meet their predicted grades and their achievement is satisfactory.
73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and many elements of the course interest students. Good lessons start with an interesting warm-up activity, have clear learning objectives and make good use of a range of teaching styles and materials. In these lessons, students are attentive and recognise the impact of geographical events. For example, the causes and effects of a flash flooding in Devon fascinated one Year 8 class. Good relationships with teachers promote confidence in answering questions, but in some lessons not enough students are encouraged to contribute extended answers. Marking is undertaken regularly, but the quality of advice provided varies. In the best examples, students are told what is good and what needs to be better. GCSE students get marking guides and are encouraged to use these as part of their work. This approach is used in Years 7 to 9, though students were mostly unable to say what is needed to improve their work. Fieldwork opportunities are limited. Teachers provide very detailed guidance on the Year 11 coastal studies coursework. Some students do not respond to this advice and a few choose not to complete their work in enough detail. Teachers do not make enough use of computers for teaching and this limits their range of teaching styles. This is because the department does not have access to computers.
74. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department has not yet successfully responded to the declining popularity of the subject at GCSE level. Students can access areas of information through the Extranet, using home computers to access information. Detailed performance data is collected, but is used to describe what has happened rather than to develop ways of improving standards. Modern resources, including good videos, support the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9. There is good support for new staff. Monitoring has not sufficiently reduced the variation in the quality of teaching and marking. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Religious education is successful both as an academic subject and for the contribution it makes to students' personal development.
- Students' enjoyment of discussing moral and social issues in Years 10 and 11 motivates them to do well in the subject.
- Very good leadership and teamwork are developing more active approaches to learning across the school.
- Assessment is inaccurate in Years 7 to 9 and more capable students are not always challenged to reach higher levels of attainment.

### **Commentary**

75. Standards in Year 9 are average, meeting the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Students have acquired systematic knowledge of basic beliefs and practices in Christianity and other religions. Their written work has been mainly short pieces this term, showing good understanding of festivals and symbolism. There has not been enough scope so far for independent enquiry and for comparison of different beliefs and practices to allow more capable students to demonstrate higher levels of attainment. Pupils behave very well in class and apply themselves diligently to work. Their achievement is good overall.
76. Nearly all students in Year 11 take the GCSE short course examination in religious education and do well. In 2003, the results were well above average and nearly half the candidates gained the top grades. The 2004 results were lower, but still above average. Contrary to the national trend, boys achieved as well as girls. There is a marked rise in students' achievement in Years 10 and 11, where it is very good. This is because they are particularly interested in discussing the social and moral issues on the GCSE course, which greatly benefits their own personal development. Teachers successfully raise students' aspirations through target setting and standards in the current Year 11 are already above average. Mixed-ability groups are helping to raise the standards of lower attainers. Regular practice of examination questions and thorough revision classes prior to trial examinations are proving very effective in maintaining above average attainment. Most students are good at evaluating different points of view and identifying similarities and differences between different religions of the world.
77. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good on the GCSE course. Teachers are specialists with a good command of the subject. They are keen to use a wider range of learning styles. In particular, starter activities are very effective in relating lessons to pupils' experience and giving opportunity for spiritual reflection. Plenaries for assessing students' learning are seldom given enough time. Where teaching was just satisfactory in some lessons in Years 7 to 9, it lacked sufficient challenge and pace to extend higher attainers. Teachers assess the work of Year 10 and 11 students regularly against GCSE criteria, giving students helpful feedback on how to improve. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not so accurate because teachers are less secure about the criteria for identifying different levels of attainment, tending to underestimate standards.
78. Leadership and management are very good and the organisation of the department's documentation, schemes of work and resources is most efficient. Self-evaluation through annual review is very thorough and informs development planning. There are clear strategies for improving standards in Years 7 to 9 through more active approaches to learning. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The curriculum has been redesigned and resources enhanced. The most notable improvement has been the huge success of the GCSE short course.

### **TECHNOLOGY**

## Design and technology

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The recently appointed head of faculty has a clear vision for the subject and a very good strategic plan for improvement.
- Planning for class activities does not always cater sufficiently for the needs of all learners.
- Recently introduced target and self-assessment sheets effectively inform students of their progress.
- The standards of work and teaching and learning in resistant materials are unsatisfactory.
- There are inconsistencies in marking and in the way feedback is given to students.

### Commentary

79. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. Students' achievement and progress is satisfactory overall. Girls perform better than boys at higher levels as they justify their decisions and evaluate work fully. GCSE results in 2003 and 2004 were well below average in food and nutrition, graphic products, electronic products and resistant materials. Textile technology results are better and in line with national expectations. Standards in the current Years 10 and 11 are improving and are now in line with national expectations in food and above expectations in textiles and graphics. Standards remain well below expectations in resistant materials. Achievement in Year 11 resistant materials is unsatisfactory as research and designing skills are underdeveloped. Girls perform better than boys in coursework as it is more structured and design criteria is detailed.
80. Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7 to 9 and better than in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in textiles and food and very good in graphics. These teachers are skilful at classroom management and the control of students, who work well independently. They have very good subject knowledge and question students skilfully about their understanding of materials and processes. Clear learning objectives are shared with students and lessons are structured well and contribute to a good level of concentration. In resistant materials, classroom management and control are weak and activities are not challenging, which leads to poor concentration, limited progress and unsatisfactory teaching and learning. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good in graphics, very good in textiles and satisfactory in food and nutrition. Students achieve well and make good progress in textiles and graphics. Most teachers build upon students' knowledge and experience of working with materials and encourage independent learning. In textiles, very good use of targeted questions builds upon students' knowledge of fabrics and understanding of manufacturing techniques. In Year 11 resistant materials, the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. There are very few reminders of expectations of work and students' coursework is not closely monitored for quality and progress. Designs lack annotation and detailed reasons for choice of style or materials. In most design and technology lessons, assessment is not used to plan for individual needs and the range of abilities in the class, so that many students are not fully supported and challenged. There are very few planned opportunities for students to work in pairs or groups. Pupils use ICT well to access research, present information and for computer-aided design work. There is insufficient use of computer-aided manufacture techniques. Homework is inconsistently set across the subject.
81. A new head of faculty started at the school in September and has brought a strong sense of direction and drive for improvement. Leadership of design and technology is now good. After three months in post, a team approach is developing. A very good strategic plan concentrates on raising standards and the profile of the subject. Management is satisfactory. The faculty has introduced very good self-assessment and target-setting processes to inform students of their progress. Marking of students' work and constructive feedback on areas for improvement are inconsistent across all aspects of the subject. The faculty has made unsatisfactory progress overall since the previous inspection, though strategies have been put in place this



term which are likely to impact upon the standards, assessment, monitoring and target setting of students' work.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

82. Two lessons of drama were sampled. In a very good Year 7 lesson, students built on previously learned skills to develop and portray key aspects of character. A Year 10 group, working on the final stages of a Christmas drama for primary schools, responded to excellent teaching to reach exceptional levels of performance and sustained achievement. One Year 11 media studies lesson was observed. Good teaching with clear instructions and targeted guidance ensured that students remained on task throughout. The main activity, involving students in the evaluation of magazines they had produced and commercial magazines, was of obvious interest to both boys and girls. They demonstrated good ICT skills in moving and highlighting text on computer and completing evaluation grids. Standards and achievement were good. Students showed good understanding of how form, layout and presentation are important aspects of attracting readers.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Very good teaching and learning leads to very good achievement and enables boys to achieve very high standards.
- The subject encourages the development of personal ideas, promoting creativity and producing students who are very engaged in their own learning.
- Mature and positive attitudes and behaviour contribute to the very effective learning.
- Assessment, used consistently in lessons, helps students to know if they are successful and how to improve.

### **Commentary**

83. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that standards are well above average. Current work in Year 9 is well above expectations. This represents excellent achievement as students join Year 7 with standards that are below expectations. Standards in Year 7 show a rapid improvement within the first term, which is made possible by very good teaching and well-chosen activities that capture the imagination of the students and results in vivid pictures and models. GCSE results were average in 2003. Standards seen currently in Years 10 and 11 are well above expectations. This represents very good achievement. Very good teaching and an excellent choice of activities have maintained high standards. These activities are well suited to students' interests and result in high levels of involvement and concentration. Students use of sketchbooks is very good and these show a rapidly growing confidence in the use of texture and colour. Above all they show that their very personal ideas are developing. Students with special educational needs are identified and make very good progress across all years.
84. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. A good range of wet and dry media are used that enable students to explore ways of working that best suit them and maximises success. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils and an atmosphere of challenge, inspiration and success exists. This atmosphere for learning is maintained by focused individual advice that encourages students to think further, explore ideas and to be very involved in their work. Carefully selected projects that encourage students to develop models of their own ideas are used in all years, which has produced a great deal of excellent work and suits boys particularly. The use of digital cameras and its link to animation is excellent. The innovative use of this technology created great interest and many highly original ideas were seen during the inspection, often humorous, topical and thought provoking. Teachers continually evaluate and assess students' work in all the lessons. As a consequence, students

know when they have been successful and how to become even better. The positive, articulate and very good attitude of the students is a major strength. Very strong links are made in all years between the work of artists, art movements and the developing ideas of students.

85. Leadership and management are very good. The shared ambition, direction and energy of the staff in establishing the subject as a major influence in the school and the department's involvement in the school's recently acquired status as a Media Arts College are very positive features of the subject. Accommodation is in need of renovation. It is poorly decorated with tables that are falling apart and generally undermines the quest for high visual standards. Standards, teaching and learning, attitudes and behaviour have all improved since the previous inspection. The subject is well placed for future development and further success.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students attain well above average standards by Year 11 and their achievement is very good.
- Challenging teaching and students' own positive attitudes to learning mean students always do their best.
- Leadership provides very good-quality musical experiences, but the procedure for monitoring students' performance across Years 7 to 9 lacks rigour.
- There are not enough computers for students to use.

### **Commentary**

86. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9. For most students, their musical ability is broadly in line with expectations on entry to the school, so their achievement is good. Standards attained by the few more competent students, especially those who play instruments, are well above expectations. This is because they use their instrumental skills and knowledge effectively in lessons and produce work of a high standard. Work by students in Year 11 is well above expectations and their achievement is very good. Performance in the 2004 GCSE examination was well above average with boys and girls attaining similarly. Although this maintains the standards reported at the previous inspection, there are now more students studying music in Years 10 and 11 and the proportion of students attaining A\* and A grades has increased. Students talk about their compositions using musical language and show immense pride and enthusiasm for their work. There are now more students studying music in Years 10 and 11, but the number and quality of computers has not increased to meet this demand. Students are therefore not able to use the most up-to-date notation and sequencing programs.
87. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are very good musicians and have a very wide knowledge of different styles of music. They regularly review the way they teach and plan their lessons to take account of learning needs of individuals and groups. As a result there are high expectations and challenge for all students. When students start their examination work in Year 10 they are well prepared and familiar with many different styles of music. Teachers then build on this knowledge and expect high-quality work, especially from the older students. Because students can work independently, they apply musical understanding successfully to examination coursework. During some lessons for students in Years 7 to 9, they are unable to sit correctly when playing keyboards because of the restricted accommodation. This means they are not always able to play melodies fluently. Working relationships are very good and students are supportive of each other. Teachers use musical language correctly in lessons, but less competent students do not develop their answers thoroughly.

88. Leadership is very good. Teamwork is strong and teachers work hard to support each other. There is consistency of approach combined with clear developmental priorities in order to give students the best possible musical environment. Management is good. Students' progress in Years 7 to 9 is not monitored with sufficient rigour, but the department is in the process of implementing potentially good tracking procedures. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities means students increase their understanding and enjoyment of different musical styles. They respond in large numbers and there is a very good social mix within these groups, which contributes significantly to their personal development. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been very good because standards have been maintained, the quality of teaching is better and students' attitudes are very good.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are average overall, but below average in gymnastics.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is good and provides for students to compete in sport.
- The new staff leading the department know what needs to be done to raise standards in lessons.

### **Commentary**

89. By the end of Year 9, overall standards of practical work are as expected. Girls make satisfactory progress in football and dance. In dance, although girls participate enthusiastically in choreographed pieces of work, there is not enough emphasis on them creating their own pieces using a developed movement vocabulary. The best standards are in hockey and badminton, where carefully structured lessons enable students to develop a good understanding of these games. By the end of Year 9, achievement in these activities is satisfactory. Standards in gymnastics are well below average for both boys and girls and none have the basic gymnastic movements that can reasonably be expected by the end of Years 8 and 9. Achievement of boys and girls in gymnastics is unsatisfactory. Students with special educational needs are integrated into lessons and achieve well.
90. Unvalidated GCSE results in 2004 improved sufficiently to be average, although in previous years, results have been well below average. By the end of Year 11, standards are as expected and achievement is satisfactory. Students on the GCSE course reach a good standard in badminton. They play a range of strokes, some disguising strokes well and executing effective drop shots. These students have a good tactical awareness of the game. Students who are not following the GCSE course do not reach the same good standards in badminton. Their level of skill is below what is expected and so they find it difficult to use tactics in their game.
91. Teaching is satisfactory, but generally better for Years 10 and 11. Occasionally, where teaching is very good, clear learning objectives, shared with students, greatly enhance learning. In a GCSE theory lesson, the teacher's very careful planning and skilful delivery ensured that students learned and achieved well. Students on the GCSE course are generally achieving better than other students in practical activities. The teaching of gymnastics does not enable students to achieve in this aspect of the subject because teaching does not focus enough on the quality of students' work. Students' attitudes and behaviour are always very good, indeed excellent on occasions. Boys and girls take part enthusiastically and always behave well in lessons. They co-operate and collaborate particularly well, which helps to improve standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Students compete keenly, but with respect for rules.
92. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. A new head of department and second in department have a clear vision for how they want the subject to develop and clear ideas about improvements that are needed. Lessons have been observed in order to monitor teaching and

learning, but these observations have not focused on the standards that students were working at. As monitoring has not extensively involved specialist teachers, good practice is not shared, nor are key points for improvements in teaching identified. Extra-curricular provision is good, particularly for games. Many boys and girls regularly take part in competitive sport, a few having played at county level. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

The school has introduced a number of applied GCSEs into the curriculum, including health and social care, science, engineering, and ICT. A Year 11 lesson in health and social care was sampled.

Standards were good. Students were very good independent learners, they had a mature and responsible attitude to their work and shared knowledge very well. They benefit from very good teaching, well-planned lessons and resources designed to support learning effectively. Students have good access to ICT to present work and research different careers in health and social care. The teaching rooms provide attractive working areas, but the individual rooms are too small to enable students to work comfortably and access all the available resources.

### **Business**

Provision in business studies is **excellent**.

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

- GCSE results are very high and students achieve very well because of their positive attitudes and behaviour and very good teaching.
- Excellent leadership and management are focussed on raising standards.
- Students make excellent progress because of the excellent guidance and target setting.
- Students benefit from well-designed resources for research, but computing equipment is becoming outdated.

### **Commentary**

93. Standards are very high. The well above average GCSE results in 2003 improved further in 2004 with an outstanding number of A\*-C grades. There is little difference in achievement between boys and girls. Achievement is very good. Behaviour is always very good. Students have positive attitudes and work independently to produce and improve their coursework. All students achieve well above expectations for their ability because lessons are well planned to meet individual needs. Students understand and use the assessment criteria and their lesson targets to focus on improvement. The 'student of the month' award is a good motivator, and was recently won by a student with special educational needs for being the quickest to reach the coursework target.
94. Teaching and learning are very good and sometimes excellent. All teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use it very well to plan carefully structured lessons that introduce and extend students' knowledge. Teaching is frequently innovative and teachers ensure that all students, whatever their ability, are actively involved in the learning process both in whole-class or individual work. Students make very good progress as a result. Homework is well designed to complement work in lessons and extends learning. Procedures for marking and assessing work are excellent. Written work is marked and returned to students the following lesson. Students improve because of the excellent written comments and guidance by teachers, and the helpful feedback they get in lessons. Teachers negotiate work targets with their students, and this motivates and helps students to achieve beyond the predicted grades at the start of the course.

95. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of business studies has a total commitment to the continuing success of the subject, and has a team of very well-qualified, experienced and enthusiastic teachers. There is an excellent supportive team spirit and departmental meetings are used well to share good practice and to strive for improvement. New teachers are welcomed, and their strengths identified and used for the good of the subject. Monitoring of teaching and learning is managed very well. All available data on prior attainment and examination results is used very well to secure further improvement. There are excellent procedures for monitoring progress, target setting and assessment. Teachers benefit from the good opportunities for professional development and frequent contact with colleagues in other consortium schools.
96. Business studies have very good purpose-built accommodation. Flexibility in using rooms enables students to have good access to ICT, however, computers are becoming outdated and this causes some frustration to students. Other resources are very good. Students have very good opportunities to enhance their learning from first-hand experience of the business world through visits and speakers. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

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

Tutors teach citizenship within the broader personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. Lessons or work were sampled in all years and most of the evidence on citizenship came from observing personal, social, health and citizenship lessons.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

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

- A high proportion of students are involved in active citizenship within and on behalf of the school, but the school does not record their participation.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and assessment due to the variable commitment of tutors.
- Good leadership is committed to increasing the status of citizenship with both staff and students.
- The course makes good use of visitors from community services and voluntary organisations.

### **Commentary**

97. By Year 9, standards are in line with what is expected nationally. Students acquire good knowledge and understanding of responsible citizenship and develop good communication skills. By Year 11, standards are still at expected levels. Achievement overall is satisfactory. Students demonstrate a good understanding of, for example, the principles of first aid and of the need for financial responsibility when using credit facilities. Students with individual needs make good progress because teachers, who are also their form tutors, know them well and provide effective support.
98. The school is committed to the provision of citizenship education and sees it as integral to students' personal development. There are a good range of additional opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process through activities such as the many drama and music events, the school and year councils and work within the local community. There is no system for monitoring the number of students who participate in these wider activities so that the school can evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.
99. Teaching seen was variable, ranging between satisfactory and very good. Students have positive attitudes because tutors, with whom they have good relationships, teach the programme. In the most effective lessons, good knowledge of course materials and

enthusiastic teaching encourages students to develop important skills of analysis and evaluation. Detailed support materials are not always used to best effect by teachers and students, especially in Years 9 and 11. Some students report that lessons can be boring, with too much reliance on filling in work booklets. The regular and systematic use of high-quality visiting experts extends the range of teaching styles.

100. Good subject leadership provides a clear vision and drive for improvement. There is clear guidance with regular opportunities for tutors to discuss the still developing citizenship element. Management is satisfactory. Fifty teachers teach the programme at the same time in the week and this limits the regular monitoring of teaching and learning. The programme is carefully designed to address the changing needs of students and deals sensitively with personal issues as well as those that relate to the challenges of living in a multicultural society.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	10	60.0	80.1	0	23.7	16.0	29.9
Biology	10	50.0	65.2	10	11.1	15	20.6
Chemistry	5	80.0	72.7	20	13.9	22	24.1
Media studies	7	71.4	86.4	28.6	23.8	28.6	32.0
Drama	2	50.0	86.5	0	19.6	20.0	30.6
English Language	9	88.9	82.9	22.2	17.5	30.0	28.7
English literature	4	100.0	85.9	50.0	19.1	42.5	30.2
French	7	100.0	78.2	71.4	18.9	52.9	27.6
Design and technology	5	100.0	74.9	0	15.1	30.0	25.3
General studies	30	76.7	73.9	3.3	17.8	22.3	25.7
Geography	4	100.0	74.3	0	19.8	25.0	26.5
German	2	50.0	81.5	0	19.3	15.0	28.9
History	3	100	80.7	0	19.5	20.0	28.6
Information technology	13	46.2	67.0	0	10.9	13.1	21.4
Mathematics	15	66.7	61.9	26.7	17.1	26.0	22.1
Music	1	100.0	86.5	0	21.4	30.0	30.7
Other social studies	8	62.5	69.7	12.5	16.7	20.0	24.1
Physics	9	55.6	68.6	0	14.4	12.2	22.7
Sports Studies	4	75.0	73.2	0	11.4	15.0	23.1

**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	22	100.0	98.6	27.3	50.2	74.5	87.5
Biology	17	76.5	96.4	29.4	39.2	57.6	78.6
Business studies	1	100.0	98.7	100.0	36.8	120.0	80.1
Chemistry	12	100.0	97.6	66.7	49.0	95.0	84.9
Combined science	6	100.0	N/A	0	N/A	76.7	N /A
Media studies	16	100.0	99.4	43.8	37.8	83.8	82.1
Drama	6	100.0	99.5	66.7	40.1	100.0	83.6
English language	22	100.0	99.4	27.3	36.3	80.0	80.9
English literature	8	100.0	99.5	25.0	46.5	75.0	86.5
French	4	100.0	98.8	50.0	51.5	75.0	87.6
Design technology	15	100.0	97.8	26.7	35.0	77.3	77.9
General studies	37	94.6	94.7	37.8	31.0	71.9	73.1
Geography	14	100.0	98.7	28.6	44.5	77.1	84.0
German	2	100.0	98.4	0	47.9	60.0	84.8
History	16	100.0	99.0	43.8	44.6	82.5	84.6
Information technology	19	94.7	95.6	21.1	24.6	69.5	69.5
Mathematics	16	93.8	96.7	37.5	55.6	78.8	88.8
Other social studies	14	85.7	97.4	28.6	42.7	64.3	81.8
Physics	9	88.9	96.7	22.2	44.6	55.6	81.7
Sports studies	11	90.9	98.0	0	30.9	50.9	75.2
Business	27	91.3	60.1	62.3	14.6	91.3	60.1
Health and social care	2	70.0	63.5	0	14.5	70.0	63.5
Leisure and recreation	1	80.0	57.9	0	10.2	80.0	57.9



## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of all abilities achieve very well.
- The very good subject knowledge of teachers ensures students are provided with a wide range of supplementary references and materials.
- Students successfully develop independent opinions in discussions and writing.
- Very good leadership and management result in close liaison and consistency in approach.

#### Commentary

101. English courses are very popular at AS and A-level. The focus for the inspection was the combined course in English language and literature. Results in 2003 were above average, as are unconfirmed results in 2004. Work seen during the inspection was also above expectations. Students in Year 13 achieve very well when their attainment on the course is measured against their earlier attainment in the subject. Several students on the A-level course had not achieved pass grades in AS level examinations, but were still making very good progress. By Year 13, students take a holistic view of the subject. They bring the ability to analyse, for example, speech in everyday life in terms of what it tells us about the status and background of the speaker to their analysis of texts studied. Students also have very good knowledge of the specific vocabulary of language study, which they use naturally in discussions and writing. Some weaker students are less confident in their use of terms referring to different schools of literary theory.
102. Teaching and learning on the course are very good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to add greatly to the quality of student discussions by immediately suggesting wider reading or useful references when questions arise. Their knowledge is also apparent in their enjoyment of the subject with its obvious benefits for the students. Very good and imaginative tasks are used to engage and challenge students. Occasionally, slightly too much ground is covered when more time for reflection is needed. A very careful use of student groupings within lessons ensures that all students hear a variety of views and gain from justifying their opinions to different partners. Teachers not only have a close knowledge of the examination assessment criteria, but also communicate this clearly to students. Marking is very detailed, carefully explains what is good in essays and also shows exactly what improvements are needed. Teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of each student in detail. The very positive response of students to such very good teaching is evident. During discussions they are keen to develop their opinions and in their creative writing enjoy using techniques they have analysed in their reading.

103. Leadership and management of English are very good. The consistent quality of approach to the subject and the close liaison between teachers of the same groups are important factors in the success of the department. The high standards of provision at the time of the previous inspection have been fully maintained.

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

104. Standards of literacy are very good and effectively support learning across the curriculum. Students are articulate in discussions. They marshal and sustain points of view in well-structured essays. They identify different levels of meaning in a variety of texts. The provision for developing language skills and the teaching of literacy in lessons are very good. Teachers regularly provide opportunities for extended oral work. In art there is a very strong emphasis on descriptive writing. In history, close attention is given to detailed analysis of the language of documentary evidence. Business education makes very good use of ICT in improving the quality of students' extended writing. The consistent quality of teaching literacy and language across departments has a very positive impact on standards.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Unvalidated results in 2004 were well above average and current Year 13 students are achieving very well.
- Teachers' high levels of subject knowledge consistently ensure very good learning.
- Assessment is very good and supports students' understanding of their learning.
- The number of students choosing to continue with mathematics into Year 13 is low.

### **Commentary**

105. Unconfirmed A-level results in 2004 were well above average. This shows very good achievement from these students' GCSE results in Year 11. Students in Year 13 are achieving very well. Their results at GCE AS level were well above average. However, a high proportion of students that were in Year 12 last year chose not to continue into Year 13. They were comparatively weaker students who also achieved very well on their AS course. Students who did continue into Year 13 are making the same very good progress as in Year 12. Most impressive is the way that formulae in algebra are clearly understood, recalled rapidly and not simply memorised as a matter of rote. The confidence shown by all students in deriving formulae is very high. These confidence levels are essential when there are a variety of possible methods that might be used. Students are determined to be successful at this level of mathematics. Students in Year 12 are progressing very well. Already, less than a term into their course they are confident learners. Students from this school in Year 12 and Year 13 studying further mathematics within the consortium are working at the highest possible levels.
106. Teaching and learning are consistently very good and they are often excellent. Lessons take place at a rapid pace because teachers are supremely confident in their own subject knowledge. Teachers make excellent use of assessment. Apart from gauging in lessons whether students are ready to move on, there is an excellent recording system shared by students and teachers. The entire syllabus is broken down into small components and students use a three-grade system to assess and indicate their own level of understanding of these different components. This sharpens the focus of future lessons and all students benefit on an individual basis. Teaching promotes very good and highly consistent independent learning and all students achieve very well.

107. Leadership and management are very good. Results are improving, as is teaching and learning. The only improvement needed of any significance is to increase the numbers of students who choose to see mathematics through to full GCE A-level.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

108. Students have competence levels in mathematics above those usually seen. Students in science use formulae and graphs well. In art, the use of scale and perspective is extremely good and good numeracy is a strength of the work in music technology. In business education, students use statistics effectively and work on finance is done consistently well.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus was on chemistry, but biology and physics were sampled. In biology, standards are average and results have been improving so that they are in line with expectations. A very good Year 13 lesson was seen in which skilful, enthusiastic teaching ensured that all students achieved well. Students showed very good practical skills and applied their good knowledge well to explain their observations of behaviour, achieving good standards in their work. In physics, results were below average in 2003, but improved in 2004. One very good lesson was seen in which Year 13 students were fully challenged in an investigation of electrical conduction. Students draw and interpret complex graphs accurately and all show very good achievement. Standards are very good.

### **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

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

- Well-qualified and experienced teachers ensure students succeed and achieve good results.
- Students have very positive attitudes and retention on courses is high.
- Assessment information is used well to monitor progress.
- Specialist accommodation is inadequate for large teaching groups.
- Monitoring lacks rigour and is not focused on how to get even better results.

### **Commentary**

109. Results at A-level were well above average in 2003. Unvalidated results in 2004 are average. Both were as expected when account is taken of the different abilities of the two year groups. All students achieved pass grades in 2003 and 2004, with a good proportion of higher grades, and girls achieving slightly better results than boys. Retention is very good, with almost all students that start in Year 12 continuing into Year 13. Standards seen during the inspection were above average. Achievement is good. All students make good progress in lessons. In Year 13, all students are currently achieving work consistent with pass grades and high-ability students are working towards the top grades. In both years, students produce high-quality, very well-organised notes and achieve high standards in practical coursework.
110. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are very experienced, well qualified and have good knowledge of the subject and its assessment. Lessons are carefully planned and well structured, with a strong emphasis on practical work that engages the interest of students. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Teachers use probing questions to ensure that students understand theory well. In some lessons, over-directed teaching prevents some students from discussing and consolidating their understanding sufficiently. Teachers use ICT well in some lessons, but this is not sufficiently well developed. Assessment

is very good. Teachers mark questions set for homework very thoroughly and students are given clear guidance on how to improve. Tests and examination questions are used effectively so that students know their current standards. Teachers provide good additional support out of lessons so that students make good progress.

111. Students work co-operatively and industriously, with very good attitudes. They enjoy the challenge of chemistry, know their levels of achievement and show good awareness of what they should do to improve. They are well organised and in Year 13 have developed good independent learning skills. They make good use of published resources and the effective revision guides produced by their teachers. They use the school network and their own computers well to support their learning, but do not use ICT sufficiently in lessons.
112. Leadership is very good with a strong commitment to student success. Management is good. Teachers work very closely within the school and effective in-service training in assessment has led to improved performance in coursework. A good, detailed scheme of work for AS level and clear timeplans for students contribute to the good organisation. Technical staff work very effectively with teachers and students. Line managers provide good support, but monitoring lacks rigour and is not focused enough on explaining why examination results are not as good as in other subjects. Good links with a local university enable students to gain experience of instrumental analysis. Specialist accommodation is inadequate for the larger groups in the subject. Overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

## **HUMANITIES**

History was inspected in depth and geography was sampled. Provision in geography is satisfactory. A-level results are consistently above average, but the proportion of higher grades is low. Teachers use their very good subject and syllabus knowledge to guide students through the course. Lessons are well planned, but their effectiveness is reduced because students do not engage in discussion or self-evaluation enough. There is little evidence of students doing the wider reading necessary to secure higher grades.

### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

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

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge ensures lessons are stimulating and challenging.
- The very good curriculum helps broaden students' understanding of history.
- Students' active participation in lessons promotes independent learning effectively.
- Very good support arrangements ensure students with special educational needs make very good progress.

### **Commentary**

113. In the 2003 A-level examination, students achieved standards that were broadly average. In 2004, unvalidated results have improved. Standards seen during the inspection are above average, with the more able students achieving standards that are well above average. This is because of very good teaching and very positive attitudes to learning of all students. The achievement of students in Year 13 is very good. They make very good use of source material. Very good teaching constantly challenges their thinking to consider various scenarios and reach a judgement.
114. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know their subject well and understand examination requirements thoroughly. As a result, students receive effective guidance on how to improve their work. In a lesson about the English Poor Law, skilful teaching helped them identify how best to answer questions of increasing difficulty. Very effective classroom support

ensures all students have full access to the course. As a result, the quality of all students' learning is very good.

115. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear view of priorities, a determination to maintain improving standards and effective systems are in place to achieve this. The head of department is a good role-model for staff and students. There are very valuable opportunities for students to attend conferences, visit museums and travel to regions of historical importance. These experiences provide students with powerful visual and oral images that enrich their understanding and have a positive influence upon the quality of their work. Because they are well taught, students clearly enjoy history and respond actively in discussion. This good level of debate and the encouragement to pursue investigative techniques promotes independent learning well. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection, especially in standards achieved.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Teaching and learning are very good and achievement is very good as a result.
- Students' models of their own ideas and supporting illustrations show very good development and high standards.
- Students have positive and mature attitudes with very good independent learning skills.
- Assessment helps students to know how successful they are and how to become better.

#### **Commentary**

116. 2003 A-level results show a 100 per cent pass rate and results were above average. Standards seen are well above average and represent very good achievement as a result of very good planning and very good teaching. Some students arrive on the course with low grades in their GCSE examinations. They make rapid gains as subject knowledge and course content are carefully presented by highly experienced teachers.
117. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Students are mature, positive and work hard and enjoy the mature way that staff treat them. Well-focussed lessons enable students to understand the assessment criteria and the requirements of the examination specification very well. They all enjoy the freedoms and choices that this course offers and often work very independently for long periods. Students are very articulate and designing is strongly individual in their project work. A wide range of product concept designing and excellent interior designing projects of a very high standard were seen during the inspection. Students know their weaknesses and their strengths because they receive very good assessments of their work and targeted guidance on how to improve.
118. The department and subject are very well led and managed. The new head of faculty and the teacher who teaches the course have a clear vision of what is required for students to work at this level. Courses are well organised with well-prepared resources. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Advanced courses are now well established and improving with many students joining the course from the other schools in the consortium.

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

Media studies was sampled during the inspection. One Year 12 lesson was observed in which standards were well above expectations. Very good teaching ensured that the students who were evaluating film productions by the previous year's students took full account of the relevant criteria. Their evaluations incorporated the necessary subject terminology and demonstrated a growing awareness of presentational components. Although some of the students from other consortium schools had not taken the subject at GCSE, carefully managed discussions ensured that all students were equally involved.

## **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students continue to make very good progress from GCSE and achieve very well.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities provide a broad art and design experience.
- Very good teaching gives students the best opportunities to achieve their potential.
- Consistently good assessment is raising standards and the quality of work.

### **Commentary**

119. GCE results were below average in 2003 and similar in 2004. The standard of work seen during the inspection is much better than these results and is above the level expected. In Year 13, some high-quality, innovative work combines different technologies, including photography and animation. The achievement of these students is very good. Students are very enthusiastic about their current work and many want to continue to study art to degree level. The number of students has increased in both years since the previous inspection.
120. Teaching and learning are very good. Planning gives students a very good range of contexts, materials and technologies to develop their expressive abilities. Questioning encourages students to make connections between their own work and that of other artists and designers in the arts and media, past and present. Students' work in progress is carefully monitored through individual discussions with teachers. During these discussions, students negotiate how they will develop their work and agree some challenging targets. Teachers encourage students successfully to take more responsibility for their own learning and to access a wide range of sources to inform their images and three-dimensional work. Portfolios and sketchbooks are well presented and contain in-depth research often linked to world issues. The standard of written work is very good in both range and content and shows an understanding of high-level texts. Students explore and refine their ideas and are successful in realising them in high-quality work in a range of media, scales and dimensions. Their confidence with ICT and skill with digital cameras, for still and moving images, are high.
121. Leadership and management are very good. Students' breadth of knowledge and skills is extended by the good use made of visits to galleries as far away as New York and by keeping up with developments in the art world today. Courses are very well managed and students benefit from an enthusiastic and committed course leader. Recent changes to the curriculum have made a very big improvement to both standards and the quality of students' experiences in art and design, especially in modelling and observational drawing. The accommodation, although adequate, is cramped and inhibits freedom of movement between areas, especially access to the dark room during lessons. Although the quality of resources is very good, their quantity is limited.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The expert knowledge of teachers encourages students to learn with confidence.
- Very good leadership is instrumental in increasing the number of students on the course.

- Students are highly motivated and show commitment to the course and other music activities.
- There are not enough computers in the department.

### Commentary

122. All students who entered the 2004 A-level examination passed, with male and female students attaining similar grades. Performance in the 2004 AS level examinations was below expectations for both male and female students. Results were at least one grade lower than expected because of difficulties in interpreting examination requirements. This was a national problem shared with other schools and has now been resolved. Work seen during the inspection now meets the specific examination requirements. Standards of work seen reflect the true ability of students and are above expectations. As a result, achievement is now very good for all students, especially as many of them did not study music for GCSE examination. The course has a very good reputation in the consortium. In 2004, two-thirds of the cohort continued from AS level to A-level.
123. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their wide range of professional expertise to very good effect in practical and theoretical lessons. Planning is thorough and as a result, activities are sequenced so that all students have access to the small number of computers. This is especially important during lessons for students in Year 12 because there are many more students than equipment available. Teaching and evaluation of students' work is sensitive to individuals' needs, yet demanding to make them think for themselves and come up with their own solutions. As a result, students are very proficient in using technology, and are well-motivated and enthusiastic learners.
124. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department is enthusiastic, strives for improvements in standards and provision and is a very good role-model for students and other staff. The growing popularity and reputation of music technology means that there is an increase in the number of students choosing to study the course. However, the number and quality of computers has not increased. The courses are well managed with students' progress effectively monitored with a constant drive for all to reach their potential. Teachers are self-critical, committed to their own professional development and seek ways to improve their teaching practice, often by sharing their practice with each other. The subject was not reported on at the previous inspection.

## BUSINESS

Provision in business studies is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) results are very high and students achieve very well because of the very good teaching,
- Excellent leadership and management are committed to success.
- The excellent arrangements for tracking progress and target-setting motivate students and raise standards.
- Students have good access to ICT, although the computers are becoming outdated and slow.
- Students have very positive attitudes to work, and meet the highest standards.

### Commentary

125. Standards are very high. VCE students attained well above average results in 2003. Girls did better than boys, but the difference is decreasing. 2004 unvalidated results are still very high, although the number of highest grades has fallen. GNVQ students attain above average results, and a significant number of these students progress onto the VCE course. Achievement is very good. VCE students attain well above expectations. All students have very positive attitudes and work independently to complete their coursework to the highest standards. GNVQ students start with lower than average prior attainment and attain higher

than expected. Achievement is very good. They maintain concentration, have positive attitudes to work and have the good support of their teachers.

126. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use it effectively to introduce new topics. Lessons meet the needs of all students. Shared lesson objectives and imaginative starters capture students' interest and prior learning is reviewed well. Teachers monitor students' progress, and provide differentiated and focussed support as required. As a result, students work independently and use their very good understanding of the assessment criteria to build their coursework portfolios to very high standards. There are good opportunities for GNVQ students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills through a range of practical and well-supported tasks. GNVQ students respond well to questions and benefit from detailed explanations that build confidence. There are excellent procedures for marking and assessment. Students are informed how they can improve, and teachers set them individual learning targets that are valued and act as good motivators, thus raising achievement.
127. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of business studies has a total commitment to the continuing success of the subject. A team of very well-qualified, enthusiastic and experienced teachers uses its strengths very well to identify and implement improvements. Self-review and evaluation of the subject are excellent, and any differences in results are fully analysed to raise standards further. Monitoring of teaching and learning is managed very well. There are excellent procedures for tracking students' progress and setting new higher targets. There are very good opportunities for professional development and teachers share good practice with subject colleagues in other schools. Business studies benefits from the very good teaching accommodation. There is equitable sharing of computers, although ICT equipment is becoming outdated and slow, causing some frustration to students. There is a wide range of excellent teacher-produced resources available on the school Intranet for students to use out of lessons. Students have good opportunity to learn at first-hand from links with business and industry and this enhances their learning. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) results are improving and students achieve well because of good teaching and feedback on their progress.
- Leadership is good, but the team lacks formal opportunities to plan improvements together.
- The use of data to raise attainment is not yet well developed.
- Students have very good access to care organisations and use the Internet to extend their knowledge.

### **Commentary**

128. Standards are average and improving. The 2003 results for GNVQ and VCE were average and VCE results improved in 2004. This is creditable as students have lower than average prior attainment compared with other sixth-form subjects and achieve better than expected. Progress is good in lessons. Achievement is higher in Year 13 because students have a mature attitude to their work and develop good skills of independent learning. More able students in Year 12 achieve well. Some low prior attainers are not yet sufficiently focused and their work lacks urgency in class and homework. At the end of Year 12, students complete the St John's Ambulance first aid certificate. These students enjoy the responsibility then of helping Year 10 students with the first aid unit in their personal, social, health and citizenship lessons.



129. Teaching and learning are good overall and in some lessons are very good. Teachers use good analogies drawn from the world of health and social care to exemplify and explain new theory. Lessons are planned to meet the broad needs of students. In smaller classes, teachers monitor progress and provide well-targeted support that enhances learning for all students. In Year 12 there are not yet enough different tasks and support to meet the needs of all students. The most successful teaching engages students well in a range of innovative activities. Most students willingly take responsibility to carry out research and share their work with others. A small number of lessons are too teacher-directed because students find concepts difficult or have not done enough preparatory work out of lessons.
130. Work is marked regularly and enables students to make good use of feedback as well as the assessment criteria to raise their coursework standards. There are very good links with organisations in the care sector and students optimise their opportunities for work placements. This builds confidence, raises awareness of different careers and provides an opportunity for students to apply knowledge in a real context. Students use ICT well to research up-to-date developments in health and social care and to present their work effectively.
131. Leadership is good, and management is satisfactory. The head of this new department sets high standards, but although the small team works hard to meet the needs of students, there is no formal opportunity to share and develop good practice further. The self-review process and use of attainment data to raise standards are still at an early stage. There is an attractive working environment with comprehensive resources that is valued by students, but the main teaching rooms are too small to accommodate the larger classes comfortably.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The leadership of other key staff	1	2
The effectiveness of management	1	2

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