

INSPECTION REPORT

COUNDON COURT SCHOOL & COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Coventry

LEA area: Coventry

Unique reference number: 103729

Headteacher: Mr J Vickers

Lead inspector: Dr F Mikdadi

Dates of inspection: 6th - 10th December 2004

Inspection number: 268789

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Coundon Court School and Community College
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1715
School address:	Northbrook Road Coventry West Midlands
Postcode:	CV6 2AJ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Peter Roach
Date of previous inspection:	12 th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Coundon Court School and Community College is a larger than average, mixed, specialist technology college. It has 1755 students on roll aged between 11 and 18. It is a 'Leading Edge' school and has formed partnerships with other schools in the local area to take a lead role in developing and spreading good practice. The school is also an 'Ambassador School' for the development of gifted and talented students and a 'Training School' for initial teacher training. The area that the school serves has a broad social mix and the attainment of students, when they start at the school in Year 7, is average. The sixth form admits students from other schools in the area. Its entry requirements are similar to those of other schools in the country and provide a range of post 16 courses, mainly at A Level but with an increasing number of other vocational courses. It is also part of Coventry's 'North West Federation of Schools', which serves to increase provision of courses at 14 - 19. This results in a small, but expanding number of shared courses in the sixth form. Although the proportion of students on free school meals (6.1%) is below the national average, the school serves some areas of significant social deprivation. Around 5.8% of the intake have English as an additional language though none are at an early stage of learning English. This is higher than most schools. 12.4% of the students have special educational needs of which 1.8% have statements. The proportion of students with special educational needs, including those with statements is average. The range of special educational needs is broad and most have learning or behavioural difficulties. There are a small number with special physical needs. The school is popular within the local area, student mobility is low and it is over-subscribed. The School also makes extensive provision for the local community and includes a nursery and crèche and adult education.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9537	Caroline Marden	Lay inspector	
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English, sixth form English
32320	Jane Gaffney	Team inspector	Mathematics, sixth form mathematics
3242	Michael Newman	Team inspector	Science
32785	Win Allt	Team inspector	Information communication technology, sixth form information communication technology
11258	Ian Rushforth	Team inspector	Art, sixth form art
31238	Gordon Clubb	Team inspector	Design technology
25073	Stuart Jordan	Team inspector	History, sixth form business education
	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Citizenship
18178	Ian Matthews	Team inspector	
11746	Robin Coulthard	Team inspector	Music
3726	Maureen Bean	Team inspector	Physical education, sixth form health and social care
33018	Angela Read	Team inspector	Religious education
2652	Robin Lomas	Team inspector	Sixth form psychology
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22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Geography, sixth form geography sixth form physical education
29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector	Sixth form chemistry
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Coundon Court School and Community College is a very good school, where students achieve above average standards. The head teacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by an able leadership team. The school has Technology College status and is also a 'Leading Edge' school which means that it takes a lead role in developing and spreading good practice. Teaching is very good and reflects the emphasis that the school has placed on encouraging and training its teachers to meet the needs of the wide range of students at the school. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Students achieve well and results in national examinations are above average
- Teaching is very good throughout the school
- Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve very well
- The enrichment programme is excellent and students participate very well
- The school's facilities and resources are used very well by the local community
- Relationships are very good and the school makes very good provision for the personal development of students
- In the very few lessons where teaching was less effective some students lost interest and did not behave well
- The new assessment policy is not being used consistently enough

Improvement since the last inspection is good. The school has successfully dealt with most of the issues raised in the last report, although it still does not meet requirements for collective worship and religious education in the sixth form. The accommodation remains a problem although successful management by teachers ensures that it does not often affect teaching and learning. Some information and communication technology (ICT) rooms have too few computers, some of which are not well maintained, and this can adversely affect learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	C	B	A
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 Similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Students achieve well. Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is average. Standards in all subjects at the end of Year 9 are above average or better so achievement overall is good. Examination results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 in English were well above average. In mathematics, science and ICT they were above average. Results of boys and girls broadly match the national differences. Standards overall at the end of Year 11 are also above average and in English, design technology and music they are well above national expectations. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 in English and science were above average and better than in mathematics where results were average. Vocational subjects do well in comparison with other subjects and the provision for work related learning is also very good. GCSE results in 2004 improved after a drop in

2003 mainly because of the better teaching. In 2004, they were above average overall and much better than those of similar schools. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve very well because of the specialist support that they receive although boys with special educational needs are generally achieving better than girls. Standards at the end of Year 13 are more variable because of the wide range of intake to the sixth form. English is well above average and mathematics, geography, ICT and health and social care are average. Other A Level subjects are above average.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development are good. Students get on very well together. They support each others' learning, and in almost all classes are keen to learn. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Attendance is good and punctuality very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is very good. The school's leading role in a number of developments has provided the impetus for continual improvement. Improving teaching and learning have been central to the success of the school. **The teaching is very good** and provides most students with stimulating and interesting experiences which help them learn and this raises achievement. Very occasionally teachers do not follow the very good teaching guidance and students become bored and listless. The assessment policy is very new and has not had time to have a significant impact, but it is not being used consistently. Students have access to a wide range of opportunities through the excellent enrichment programme. These include music and sports activities and pre-school classes in examination subjects which are well attended. Gifted and talented students are able to attend specialist weekend courses at the local universities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and a clear vision for the future direction of the school. The leadership team and nearly all of the key staff provide good support and together with the staff they are helping to drive the school forward. Governance is good and governors are gradually becoming more effective in evaluating progress. The school has extensive systems for monitoring its own performance although this is not always based on first hand evidence of the impact of initiatives on students' experience or achievement.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students express positive views of the school. Students felt secure and were confident that the school would provide help for them when required. Some parents are concerned about behaviour in some classes and the inspectors agreed that in a very small number of classes, behaviour was poorer because the teaching was not as good.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Monitor and evaluate more directly, the impact on students' achievement of the range of initiatives in which the school is involved
- Ensure that the small number of weaker lessons is brought up to the standard of the majority of lessons
- Ensure that the new assessment policy is being consistently applied

Sixth form

- Ensure that the accommodation in the sixth form is adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum and improve the social provision

And to meet statutory requirements

- Provide a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

Coundon Court School provides a very good sixth form for students from the school and for those who join from other local schools. Students' achieve very well and the quality of teaching is very good. The curriculum is very good and is enhanced by increasingly effective links with the partnership schools in the consortium. Results dipped in 2003 from a previous high of well above average in 2002, to above average. Results in 2004 have shown an improvement on the 2003 figures in some subjects. The sixth form is very cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- The teaching is very good. It is challenging and effectively develops students' intellectual skills and abilities
- Students enter the sixth form with a wide range of previous qualifications and their overall achievement is very good
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and a strong 'culture for learning' has been successfully developed
- For some subjects the rooms are inadequate and social provision for the sixth form is unsatisfactory

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 sixth form subjects were inspected in depth. In the sampled subjects, teaching and achievement were very good in history, music, theatre studies and AVCE business, good in media studies and English language and satisfactory in biology and physics.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English literature: Very good. Teaching and learning are very good in English literature and students achieve very well French: Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
Mathematics	Mathematics: Very Good. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well.
Science	Chemistry: Very good. Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching and learning.
ICT	Information and communication technology: Very good. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well.
Humanities	Geography: Good. Students achieve well. Teaching is good. Psychology: Very good. As a result of very good teaching and learning, students achieve very well.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Not inspected
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design: Good. Students achieve well as a result of the good teaching and learning.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Physical education: Very good. Teaching and learning are very good with students achieving very well.
Business	Business Studies: Very good. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching and learning.
Health and social care	Health and social care: Very good. Teaching and learning are very good with students achieving very well.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
General education	General studies and citizenship were sampled. Teaching and learning were good and lead to students achieving well.

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

Students are very well supported through the tutorial system. Their progress is very well monitored on a regular basis by their subject teachers and tutors and also by senior staff. Students who join the school in the sixth form fit in well and are effectively supported in settling in by tutors and subject teachers. The majority of Year 13 goes on to higher education and students receive comprehensive advice and information from teachers. Individual support and guidance is usually very good and that given on university application is very thorough.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. The philosophy of building teams to sustain success, which underpins leadership in the main school, is evident in the sixth form. The very good range of opportunities is extended by participation in the consortium of local schools. The shared provision for modern foreign languages is very well managed and gives students greater choice. The range of mathematical courses is also enhanced with students having the opportunity to study further mathematics at Warwick University. Local business provides opportunities for work related learning. Leadership ensures an excellent extracurricular provision with students involved in activities such as Young Enterprise and World Challenge.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students generally have high regard for the sixth form provision and their teachers. They feel that they get good support and advice and that induction procedures are effective. They were critical of some of the accommodation; a view which the inspectors feel is justified.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- Ensure that the accommodation is adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum and improve social provision

And to meet statutory requirements

- Provide a daily act of collective worship and religious education

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average in all subjects except in citizenship where they are average. By the end of Year 11, they are all above average except for history which is average. Standards design technology subjects and music are well above average. Because students enter the school with average attainment, they achieve well between Years 7 to 11. Standards in the sixth form show greater variation between the subjects and overall are above average. Given the students' average attainment on entry to the sixth form, achievement overall is very good

Main strengths

- Students achieve well and in some subjects achieve very well
- Examination results at the end of Year 9 and 11 are improving and remain above the national averages
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well
- Students in the sixth form achieve very well

Commentary

1. In 2004 at the end of Year 9 results in the national tests in the core subjects were overall well above the national average and well above those of similar schools. Students achieved well above average results in tests in English. Mathematics, science and ICT were each above average. Over time the school has remained above the national averages. Given the students' average attainment on entry to the school, this is good achievement. The table shows how the school has maintained above average results for the past two years, and also how English in particular improved between 2003 and 2004.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.7 (33.3)	31.4 (33.4)
mathematics	37.0 (36.6)	35.0 (35.4)
science	34.4 (35.0)	32.8 (33.6)

There were 299 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. There was very little variation in standards between the subjects and all, with the exception of citizenship, were above average. English which has been somewhat weaker in comparison with mathematics and science has now reached similar above average standards. Because the attainment on entry to the school is average, students are consistently achieving well in all subjects. Boys and girls do equally well.
3. The table shows the change in GCSE results between 2003 and 2004 and the comparison with the national picture. The proportion of students achieving 5 or more A* - C grades was above the national average. The proportion achieving 5+ A* to G and 1+ A* - G, were well above national results. Given the average attainment of these students when they entered the school in Year 7, they have made very good progress during their time in the school and their achievement is very good.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	59 (57)	53 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96.8 (90)	87 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100(98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	310.1 (37.1)	282.3 (34.7)

There were 280 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. In the GCSE results in 2004 English and science were above average, although mathematics was average and declined slightly from the previous year. Results in other subjects were generally better than the national averages, although there was variation. ICT results were below average, history did less well than in previous years, and was only average, whereas results in geography, French and music were well above the national averages. Results in the design technology group of subjects were all at least average with textiles, food technology and graphics being well above average. The 2004 results indicated very good student achievement between Year 7 and the end of Year 11.
5. In English, Music and Design Technology standards of work seen were well above average and are better than the already above average standards in these subjects at the end of Year 9. All other subjects were above average although history was average. Improvement in the quality of teaching is leading to improving standards but have yet to have a full impact on the GCSE results in all the subject areas. Students continue to achieve well or better in all subjects, although achievement in ICT is satisfactory. Overall the good achievement of students between years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11, results in very good achievement from Years 7 to 11.
6. The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good overall. Their achievement is supported by the very good arrangements for allocating students to classes where most receive high levels of challenge and support from teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs). Students with statements make very good progress because of the care taken by the learning support teachers and LSAs to ensure that they keep up with course work and homework, for example, through the study skills sessions in the learning support department. The progress made by some groups of students is limited by their poor organisational skills: some do not do their homework on time and find it difficult to remember to bring the necessary equipment to lessons. Students in Years 10 and 11 who take the 'Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network' (ASDAN) course make good progress in developing life skills. However, a small number of more able students in these years make less progress in some subjects because the level of challenge is occasionally too low for them.
7. Students with English as an additional language are at an advanced stage of learning English. They achieve very well and their standard of work is in line with other students. They receive very good support from specialists who focus on helping them with the more complex language use. They also receive very good support in main stream classrooms.

Sixth form

8. The overall picture in the sixth form is more variable, partly because of the wide entry requirements to the sixth form, partly because the sixth form accepts students from other schools and also because of the fairly wide range of courses on offer. The school carefully assesses the progress made by its students by checking the results in Year 13 against the students' earlier results at GCSE. This analysis indicates that student achievement in the 2004 examinations was good with students doing particularly well in mathematics, economics, chemistry and biology. The table based on point scores, shows results for the year 2004. Results overall in 2004 showed some improvements, but overall were very similar to those for 2003.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	91.4 (91.4)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	28.7 (28.9)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per student	252.6 (253.0)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 129 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2003).

Note: The basis for calculating the scores has changed since last year.

9. Of the 33 subjects on offer in the sixth form, 18 were either reported on in full or sampled. Standards seen were above average, although in English they were well above average. Student achievement is very good, because the students currently in the school have been accepted onto the courses with a wider range of GCSE grades than in previous years.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attendance is good and their punctuality is very good. They behave well and have good attitudes to school. Students' personal development is very good. Provision for social, moral and cultural development is very good and is good for spiritual development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school promotes very good relationships within the whole school community
- Students' attitudes in a large majority of lessons are good and in many they are very good. This results in good standards of achievement
- Sixth form students' attitudes to the school and their work are very good
- The school deals very well with any instances of bullying
- The school provides very well for students' personal development
- Students show a lack of respect for their environment by dropping litter

Commentary

10. Attendance is above the national average and unauthorised absence is less than half the national average. The school monitors students' attendance very closely using a computerised system and any absences from lessons are promptly detected. Parents are contacted on the first day of absence and this has improved the already high level of attendance.

Attendance for 2003 -2004

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.0	School data	0.3
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

11. Students enjoy school and usually work hard. They respond very well to lessons which have a practical activity or where there is a range of different styles of learning. For example, in a history lesson, students were given a variety of different sources, including a film, a picture and writing to use to establish what happened at Charles 1st's execution. In this lesson students evaluated the sources individually, in pairs and as a class. This effectively ensured that all students were fully involved throughout the lesson. In the few lessons where teachers' behaviour management skills are less developed or the activity does not challenge the students appropriately, there can be low level disruption in the form of chatter with students losing concentration. Consequently students do not achieve or behave as well as they should.

12. Behaviour around school is good. During break times students socialise sensibly and they are polite and helpful to visitors. Some parents expressed concern at the behaviour of students as they left the site at the end of the day; however the inspection evidence indicated that students left in an orderly and properly supervised manner. There were no permanent exclusions in the last year. This positive picture is marred by the lack of respect students show for their environment by dropping a large amount of litter.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1518	51	0
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	11	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	13	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	110	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	18	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	8	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0

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

13. Students' personal development is very well supported by subjects across the curriculum. Teachers actively promote social skills by arranging for students to work in different groupings and by insisting that they listen respectfully to each other's points of view. This results in students working very well together and also in a very high level of racial harmony. The consistently high expectations teachers have for behaviour helps students to develop a moral code. In many lessons moral issues are sensitively discussed. For example in geography, students consider the effects of global warming on the environment. Students play an active role in the life of the school, for example as school councillors or mentors for younger students. The school takes very seriously its responsibility for helping students understand and value different cultures and this is evident in subjects such as art, religious education and modern foreign languages. History also makes a very strong contribution to this area, stressing the values of different cultures, for example, comparing Ali Akbar and Queen Elizabeth 1st. Spiritual development is also strongly promoted especially in relation to building students' self esteem. The very good relationships that teachers have with students give them the self confidence to aspire to higher standards without fearing failure. Students also reflect upon the natural world in art and music.

Sixth Form

14. Students are very positive about their experience in the sixth form. They respond very well to their lessons, often being totally engrossed in their work. They want to do well and this high level of motivation effectively supports their independent learning so that they produce high quality work that is well presented and organised.

15. Relationships with each other are very good allowing high quality discussions to take place. Relationships are also very good between students and their teachers, with students particularly valuing the level of support they get from both subject teachers and pastoral staff. This results in students seeking help when they require it.
16. There are good opportunities for personal development with students having the opportunity to take on responsibility in a number of different areas. They help with out of school clubs and support younger students with their reading and spelling. A recent development has been the production of a sixth form newsletter by students on their own initiative.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The school has placed considerable emphasis on the development of teaching strategies which engage and motivate the students. They are supported well through an effective pastoral system and the concern of all teachers to promote the students' personal development. The school has developed strong links with a number of local partners including schools and the local universities and also with local business. These very effective links are helping to raise standards. The 'Leading Edge' status of the school also encourages teachers to continually strive to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good or better in all subjects and so overall are very good. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and effectively communicate their enthusiasm for their subject
- The good rapport between teachers and students encourages students to learn well
- In the high proportion of good and better lessons teachers have high expectations and structure lessons to meet students' needs
- Teachers adapt their teaching style and provide a range of activities so that most students are constantly focussed on, and engaged in, learning
- Where these strategies are not used, the students quickly become bored and indifferent and misbehave
- The new assessment policy is not being used consistently and though some assessment is good, there is too much variation between subjects

Commentary

17. The overall quality of teaching is very good across all years. The number of excellent and very good lessons is high and reflects the way in which the school has focussed its work on the development of teaching. In the whole school, over eight in every ten lessons is good or better and nearly half very good or excellent.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 184 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
13 (7.1%)	72 (39.1%)	60 (32.6%)	34 (18.5%)	5 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

18. The analysis of the parents and students questionnaires showed that over nine out of every ten of the respondents thought that teaching was good or better, a high proportion broadly confirmed during the inspection. The quality of teaching is consistently good across all subjects although modern foreign languages (in all years) and in English, history and music in Years 10 and 11 stand out because of the high quality of the teaching. The knowledge and enthusiasm which many teachers have for their subject and their desire to challenge the students result in many lessons being very stimulating and as

a result students learn very well. This also helps produce the strong positive attitudes which many students have toward their learning and consequently helps them to achieve well.

19. The school has worked hard to develop and apply teaching strategies which enable students to learn. Activities are carefully timed to last a specific period of time and changed so that student interest is maintained. The approach is used successfully in all subjects. In a Year 9 French lesson, the students experienced a short, sharply focussed starter activity which quickly engaged everyone because the teacher addressed questions at random to each student. Listening and oral skills were then practised followed by individual work, then group work. The high pace and careful timing of the activities kept students constantly engaged.
20. In lessons where the approach is not well used, for example in a lesson where a special needs mathematics group was expected to maintain interest in the same activity for more than 15 minutes, the group lost its focus and behaviour deteriorated. In the rare unsatisfactory lessons, this was a common problem and reflected poor planning and weak behaviour management on the part of the teachers.
21. Because the school is an 'Ambassador School' for the gifted and talented, the need to provide work of different levels of difficulty has received a particular emphasis. The most effective lessons therefore have additional materials and activities which provide further stimulation and interest for these and other students.
22. Teachers' use of new technology is variable, partly because of the availability of equipment. For example, teachers are making increasing use of interactive white boards and data projectors. These provide strong visual representations of the work and grab the attention of the students. The use of these facilities is further encouraged by the initial teacher training students who undertake teaching experience in the school. These students often come with considerable knowledge of how to use this technology and 'encourage' teachers in the school to keep pace with these developments. The school has now provided many teachers with lap top computers, but the use of these for record keeping, for preparing teaching notes and to 'drive' the data projectors is still somewhat limited.
23. Assessment is satisfactory but there is wide variation between subjects about the methods and quality of assessment. In some subjects, for example in French, students know their working level and are told very clearly what to do to improve. This information is also clearly communicated during lessons so that students know the working level or grade of the work they are doing. In other lessons students are given very little information about targets or how to improve. The marking system, which identifies strengths and weaknesses in students' work and gives specific guidance on how to improve, is most effective in Years 10 and 11. Overall however the quality and processes of assessment are inconsistent. The new school assessment policy is intended to provide a more coherent approach, but it has not yet had enough time to 'bed down'.
24. Overall, teaching meets the needs of students with special educational needs very well. Specialist teachers working in the learning support department have very good knowledge and understanding of students' needs and provide individual programmes of work. In lessons outside of the support department, teachers have high expectations of students. Where tasks and materials are modified to help them to access class work, they make very good progress, for example, the enlargement of board work for students with visual impairment. However, the modification and adaptation of resources and methods for teaching are not consistent across all subject departments.
25. Teachers often set subject targets for special educational needs students and make good use of these in planning lessons. Progress is limited however when these targets are not used. Students with SEN who have individual learning plans also have subject specific targets, but practice is inconsistent with regard to how this information is used to plan lessons. In some lessons without LSA support where several students have literacy or other learning difficulties, class teachers are not always able to give them the attention they need. The teams of LSAs have very good specialist knowledge and work

closely with some subjects departments, but their deployment prevents this expertise being shared with all departments.

26. Because teachers are aware of the needs of students with English as an additional language and make appropriate modifications to the lessons, these students receive very good support in main stream classrooms.

Sixth form

27. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. The strategies used successfully in the earlier years are applied well in the sixth form but are often improved for example by developing more sophisticated thinking skills so students are challenged to explain their ideas and to justify their conclusions. Students have confidence in their teachers and the lessons observed were usually lively, very well planned and the rate of learning was high. The school takes students with a wide range of GCSE qualifications and most teachers successfully adapt work to meet their needs. However this practice is not universal and there were rare examples of work not being well matched to students' needs and where pace and challenge could have been better.

The curriculum

The curriculum for students aged 11 - 16 is good and for the sixth form very good. The opportunities for enrichment are very good and the students are offered an excellent programme of activities. Student participation is very good. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. The level of resources is good and although accommodation is satisfactory overall it is unsatisfactory in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides very well for the learning needs of all groups of students
- An excellent enrichment programme provides students with a wide range of activities beyond the normal school day
- Curriculum provision for students with special needs is good
- There are not enough learning support assistants to help students with special educational needs, including those with physical disability
- Provision for work related learning and preparation for later stages of education or employment are very good
- The management of ICT resources does not give students enough access in lessons and the number of usable computers is limited
- The cramped accommodation means that teachers have to work very hard to prevent learning from being unduly affected, and in some sixth form subjects accommodation problems restrict learning

Commentary

28. The curriculum provides well for the particular needs of the school's wide range of students and is supplemented by occasional 'whole day' subject experiences and very good opportunities for enrichment. Technology days in Year 9 promote engineering, teamwork and thinking skills and some of the citizenship programme in Years 10 and 11 is taught during special whole day sessions that enhance the normal curriculum.
29. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides students with a good balance between compulsory subjects and a choice of options. In addition to English, mathematics and science, all students take at least one design and technology course, and GCSE short courses in religious education which includes some citizenship, and ICT. Students can then choose to take appropriate vocational courses alongside the more traditional academic ones. Those with a particular aptitude in design and technology can take an additional GCSE and capable mathematicians take GCSE early and then do statistics.

30. The curriculum is greatly enriched by activities and additional learning support. There are 19 groups, choirs or bands in the music department and eight extra-curricular sports as well as Saturday morning fixtures. Activities are very well supported by students of all ages and many achieve well at county and national level. The school has Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark Gold awards. Visits to theatres and places of cultural interest are frequent and include language trips abroad and a cruise in the Eastern Mediterranean. Many subjects offer extra lessons to improve or to add to students' academic achievements. Overall the provision is unusually extensive.
31. The provision made for all students with special educational needs is good overall and the ethos of the school helps students to be fully included in the activities of the school. Very good additional provision is made for students with physical difficulties who are not able to join physical education lessons and specialist provision for students in Years 7 to 9 helps students with low reading and spelling ages to develop literacy skills. Small group withdrawal, lunchtime and after-school clubs and paired reading and spelling are all used well to improve attainment. Students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from the study support sessions for students who find it difficult to complete coursework independently. Specialist teachers give very good one to one and small group support for students with dyslexia.
32. LSAs are well trained and deployed to support students with a statement of special need; they also give good guidance to other students as opportunity arises. However, the current allocation of LSA time is not able to meet all the needs of students on the SEN register. For example, some students with visual impairment do not consistently have class materials and resources adapted and modified for them.
33. The school makes good provision for students' personal, social and health education. There is planned coverage of topics including sex, drugs and alcohol related themes within citizenship, religious education and other subjects when relevant. Whilst provision for pupils' personal development overall is very good, and all subjects make valuable contributions, these are not co-ordinated. Careers education is a strength. Guidance on the next stage of education and also employment opportunities is very thorough, and in the hands of well trained staff. It begins early and involves both students and parents. The work of Connexions makes a very good contribution to both careers guidance and work related learning, offering student interviews, curriculum support and on line services.
34. The school's Inclusive Curriculum Project provides individual timetables for students in Years 10 and 11 who can benefit most from work related learning. Collaboration between school, companies and the community, produces individual timetables that meet the needs of students who would otherwise be disadvantaged. Recognition and use of different learning styles help students get more benefit from the curriculum. This work is well established in English and is being developed in other subjects. Ambassador School Status recognises the school's work with gifted and talented students.
35. Though many rooms are cramped and in need of re-decoration they are enhanced by attractive displays of students' work and learning resources. Fittings and furniture are often very worn. Only in modern foreign languages is the accommodation good otherwise it is generally satisfactory. In most subjects and years, teachers manage to limit any negative impact of accommodation. Indoor facilities for physical education inhibit the range of activities and the lack of markings reduces the effective use of outdoor provision. Access for wheelchair-users enables their participation in all subject areas.
36. Teaching and learning resources are good in the majority of subjects and very good in modern foreign languages. In all areas they are at least sufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum and promote effective learning. The school has an appropriate number of computers but the size of some of the teaching rooms and some broken machines, results in some lessons where there are insufficient numbers of computers for a whole class and where learning can be adversely affected.

37. Staffing for the whole school has been managed efficiently and effectively to overcome difficulties experienced in previous years. Staffing in the core areas of English and mathematics is very good, in science it is good. Weaknesses in physical education and music stem from temporary arrangements, the result of factors not wholly within the control of the school. In all subjects staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to teach all elements of the full 11 - 19 curriculum.

Sixth form

38. A very good curriculum provides a wide range of courses at different levels. Amongst the twenty five courses available are those leading to AS, A2 and AVCE qualifications. The sixth form is open to all students who wish to continue their education beyond Year 11. Group sizes are sufficient to allow the school to continue courses even when group numbers drop due to students giving up or changing a subject. Access to courses is enhanced by the effective consortium arrangements whereby students are taught minority subjects at neighbouring schools. The shared provision for modern foreign languages is very well managed and gives students greater choice. The range of mathematical courses is also enhanced with students having the opportunity to study further mathematics at Warwick University. Statutory requirements for religious education are not met although there is some provision within general studies.
39. The majority of Year 13 moves on to higher education and students receive comprehensive advice and information from teachers, Connexions, visits to local employers and talks from undergraduate ex-students of the school. The main school enrichment programme is extended and includes subjects and activities such as ICT skills, Young Enterprise, and Community Sports Leader Award. Students continue to participate in whole school extra-curricular activities.
40. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. In common with the main school many rooms are in need of refurbishment. In English, business studies, psychology and modern foreign languages accommodation is good. In media studies it is cramped and unsatisfactory. There are too few laboratories to accommodate all groups for all lessons. Social areas are shabby and poorly furnished with students having no quiet area to work in except the main-school library. Teaching and learning resources are good, though the inefficient maintenance of information and communication technology hardware causes problems with student access to computers.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Students are monitored and supported well as they move through the school. Students' views are sought and when the school considers appropriate, acted on.

Main strengths

- Adults know students well and provide effective support for their safety and security
- Induction arrangements for Year 7 are good as are arrangements to welcome outside students into the sixth form
- Good systems for monitoring progress ensure that students receive effective individual guidance, particularly when they are choosing courses for Years 10 and 11 and for the sixth form
- The advice and guidance received from the careers service are very good
- Students have good opportunities through the school council to contribute to the school's work and development
- Sixth form students value the good support and guidance that they receive from their tutors and subject teachers
- Advice on entry to university is particularly thorough

Commentary

41. Students appreciate the individual support readily given by staff. The tutor system is an efficient vehicle for advice and guidance at different stages in a student's school life and is backed up by

support agencies as required. Most students have a strong relationship with teachers. They talk to their form tutor or head of year and feel confident to speak to whichever member of staff they know best. Year 11 students are on hand to support younger students. Older students benefit from the very good guidance in subject choice and careers provided by the Connexions Service. Students who have special educational needs are well supported.

42. Child protection procedures are securely in place. The two coordinators are knowledgeable. There is regular training for staff so that they are clear what they should do if they have any concern about a child's safety or well-being. Senior staff are vigilant in ensuring good supervision during breaks and lunchtimes as well as at the end of the school day. Health and safety procedures are well established but not rigorously applied to ensure that all potential risks are quickly identified and dealt with.
43. The induction programme for new students has developed very well. The strong pastoral link with primary schools has been significantly improved.
44. There are well-managed arrangements for assessment and for tracking progress. Information from national examinations and regular testing is collated and analysed well and provides information to parents and teachers. It is used effectively to identify potentially under-achieving students. The assessment of students with SEN is good and for those with statements very good. The requirements of the Code of Practice are met. Reviews are held regularly and very good contact is maintained with parents. Progress made by students with special educational needs is tracked across departments. The impact of form tutors on student guidance is sometimes limited by staff turnover, which cuts across the school's preferred system of tutor stability. Tutors do not yet have an active role in academic monitoring.
45. The school council gives students a good forum to express their views and to influence the work of the school. Recent development as a result of their views, include more healthy eating options in the canteen. An area that the school council has raised, as did parents at the parents meeting, is the lack of suitable indoor areas for them to use at break times during inclement weather.

Sixth form

46. Students are very well supported through the tutorial system. The majority say that their progress is very well monitored on a regular basis, not only by their subject teachers and tutors, but also by senior staff. Individual support and guidance are usually very good and that given on university application is very thorough. Often there is good, focused use of tutorial time. Students who join the school in the sixth form say that they are able to fit in well and are well supported in settling in by both tutors and subject teachers. The advice offered by Connexions advisers is generally seen as helpful by those students who seek it.
47. Students volunteer their services to mentor younger students and support the form tutors in the morning sessions. A significant number of students say that they can approach senior staff with ideas and requests particularly in respect of increasing sports opportunities. Several students said they felt that they could make a much more significant contribution to school life if encouraged to do so.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The links with parents are good. They are very good with the community, other schools and colleges.

Main strengths

- Very good links with other schools extend the curriculum and support teachers' professional development
- Links with the local community are extending students' experiences and supporting their learning
- The school makes very good provision for the local community
- Parents are very supportive of the school

Commentary

48. There is a good range of information for parents and reports on students' attainment and progress that have improved since the last inspection. In nearly all subjects teachers report either the national curriculum or GCSE grade students are working at. The exceptions are physical education and science. The science reports for Years 7- 9 quote test results as a percentage but there is no indication of what level this represents. All subjects give good statements about what students know and can do. There is also some good advice on how students can improve their work but this is not always the case with some being too general to be helpful, for example, 'keep working hard'.
49. The response of parents in the Ofsted questionnaire was positive. Parents were generally very happy with the school and there was a strong view that students make good progress. The inspection confirmed this view. The parents' association is highly valued by the school. It works hard to provide extra resources and is also used as a sounding board by the senior management team. The school consulted with parents more widely last year by sending out its own questionnaire. The results of this exercise have however only had limited impact so far.
50. There is very good provision of facilities for local people, some excellent, including day care for under fives, adult education and use of the school's sports facilities. Links with local businesses provide very good opportunities for work placements for work related learning. Partnerships with local businesses have enabled students to take part in national competitions and develop their skills, for example in engineering.
51. The school's 'Leading Edge Status' has enabled many partnerships with other local schools and colleges and has been beneficial to students and staff in the schools concerned. Involvement with the initial teacher training programme has provided Coundon Court teachers with training so they can become student teacher mentors. Advanced skills teachers have helped to raise the skills of teachers in other schools by working with them. Master classes provided by Coundon Court for Year 6 students have extended their experiences in areas such as technology, science and mathematics. As part of its very effective role as a technology college, Coundon works closely with both primary and secondary schools providing technical support and sharing its expertise.
52. The school has made good progress in developing provision with local special schools and Local Education Authority services to help students with special educational needs improve their social and study skills. Year 7 students have benefited from the sessions run by the Advanced Skills Teachers from Corley School. The school works closely with LEA and other external services to meet the needs of the different groups of students, for example those with visual impairment.

Sixth Form

53. The North West Federation of Coventry Schools contributes to an extended curriculum for post 16 students. Local business provides opportunities for work related learning. While links with local colleges give students the opportunity to study more vocational courses such as animal welfare. Information for parents is good and they are kept well informed about their children's attainment and progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The very good leadership of the headteacher and good leadership of the school staff are continuing to drive up standards in the school. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head teacher provides very good leadership and has a clear vision for sustaining the success of the school
- Governors are kept well informed of the school's achievements; they are supportive and committed to helping the school improve
- The head and senior team have developed an approach to management which expects and enables all staff to take responsibility for raising standards
- Evaluation is not sufficiently refined to ensure that judgements are made on the basis of first hand evidence

Commentary

54. The governors are kept well informed of developments in the school. Briefings by members of the leadership team help them obtain a picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The Governing Body have evaluated their work and have reorganised themselves into three committees in order to become more efficient and effective. Governors are involved well at a strategic level in the formation of policy and play a significant role in monitoring the schools' progress against the specialist college development plan. They are aware of their role as a critical friend to the school and are seeking ways to make themselves more effective in this respect. For instance two governors spent a morning with students in Year 8 to gain first hand experience of the curriculum students receive.
55. The head teacher is a very effective leader who has been successful in developing a climate for change in the school. The development of strong teams throughout the school, particularly the leadership team, and the sharing of good practice is ensuring that the school continues to be successful. Annual faculty reviews, which monitor student attainment and progress against the development plans, take place in the autumn term. These help to provide, for governors and the leadership team, an overview of what is happening at departmental level.
56. The school is well supported by middle managers who share the head teacher's vision. History, modern foreign languages and music benefit from excellent leadership. In English and design technology both leadership and management are very good. The special educational needs department is very well led and managed. Even in some well led subject areas however there are inconsistencies in the way in which whole school policies, such as assessment and that relating to monitoring the quality of teaching, are implemented.
57. The school Improvement plan is formed from the vision for sustainable success and compliments well the specialist college development plan. It helpfully concentrates on curriculum, assessment and the institution's role as a Leading Edge School.
58. The school makes extensive use of data to monitor its performance. Examination results are carefully analysed, with a particular emphasis on how individual students have achieved compared to expectations. As a result, raising student achievement has been given a high profile in the school. Some of the routine monitoring of performance is anecdotal and there is insufficient emphasis placed on gathering first hand, direct evidence of what students do and experience. So for example, the new assessment policy has not yet been fully evaluated at the student level by checking directly with them what they know about progress, targets and how to improve in each subject.
59. Systems for staff development and for the induction of new staff are very well organised and very effective. The school makes a significant contribution to the training of new teachers which enhances the emphasis that the school has placed on developing teaching and learning. Strong links with several universities bring considerable benefit to the school. Newly qualified teachers are very thoroughly trained in school procedures.
60. Members of the senior management team are linked with departments. They and heads of subjects carry out a programme of lesson observations, leading to target setting and subsequent review. Lack of time sometimes prevents heads of department from doing the number of observations required. Performance management is very well organised and staff negotiate specific targets with team leaders.
61. Financial management is good. The school implements the principles of best value well and governors are fully involved in planning and monitoring the budget. At the time of the last audit report there were seven recommendations from the previous report which had not been acted on but have since been implemented. Although the school is carrying forward a significant surplus all except £57,219 is already committed.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	7193297
Total expenditure	6473554
Expenditure per student	3688

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	263850
Balance carried forward to the next	719743

Sixth form

62. The sixth form is led and managed well. The philosophy of building teams to sustain success, which underpins leadership in the main school, is extended into the sixth form. Effective management ensures that the school offers a very good range of opportunities to students. This is enhanced through a commitment to the North West Federation and also through very good extracurricular provision. Detailed analysis of examination results is used to inform curriculum planning.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work related learning

63. Work related learning is very good. The leadership of work related learning (WRL) has shown enthusiasm and dynamic commitment to developing a wide range of relevant courses and activities over several years, and has secured a shared commitment to WRL in the school. Provision is very good. Part of its success is due to exposing students early on to ideas which prepare them for the world of work. For example, a Year 7 mathematics class was given an opportunity to develop problem-solving skills using information control technology in a work environment at Jaguar Cars. WRL contributes well to personal development. For example, Year 10 girls who attend a BTech course in drama at a local theatre and a NVQ animal welfare course at a local college, gave a clear account of how their experiences had helped them become more confident in personal skills as well as in their aspirations for work. The students have responded very well to the high expectations, such as attendance and effort, which were expected of them. The dedicated work of Connexions staff is a further example of the effectiveness of provision. The very good careers programme targets students who may need sensitive support and individualised programmes. The school has negotiated a wide range of positive training, through links and partnerships with local businesses and the local federation of schools.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is very good.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership and management have improved lesson planning and have led to improved results
- Students learn well because teachers analyse student progress and adapt their teaching to meet their needs
- Teachers use a variety of methods and content in lessons which engage students' interest and curiosity
- Advice given to students on how to improve is inconsistent, and often lacks detail

Commentary

Examination results

64. On entry to the school, students' attainment in English is broadly average. Results in 2004 at the end of Year 9 are well above average and have increased significantly over the previous years. Overall, girls did better than boys. Results in English exceeded those in both mathematics and science. GCSE results in 2004 were above the national average and well above those of similar schools. English literature standards were well above the national average both overall and for the proportion reaching higher grades. Again, girls did better than boys but both were well ahead of their respective national average.

Standards and achievement

65. By Year 9, overall standards are above average and students achieve well. They listen attentively, take part sensibly in discussions, and answer questions thoughtfully. They are trained well to consider and debate current controversies such as the proposal to ban smoking in public. They summarise fact and opinion succinctly before expressing their own judgements with conviction in their writing. Middle attaining students understand and analyse rationally the way emotive language manipulates readers for propaganda purposes. Higher attaining students lay out written arguments logically.
66. Standards improve further by the end of Year 11 and overall are well above average and student achievement is very good. Students understand and enjoy modern poetry, identifying technical features such as alliteration, metaphor, and rhyme. Higher attaining students vary sentence structure and construct paragraphs skilfully to organise their ideas and convey them with vitality to the reader. In all years, lower attaining students and those with special educational needs achieve well because they benefit from supportive teaching.

Teaching and learning

67. Teachers gain students' interest and involvement by drawing on a wide variety of equipment, activities, materials and approaches. As a result for example, students enjoy reading fiction and write enthusiastically about what they have read, demonstrating a full awareness of plot and character. Higher and middle attaining students benefit from a quick fire succession of teachers' information, questions and presentations which engage their curiosity and develop well their ability to argue a point of view. Lower attaining students have work which is successfully adapted well to challenge and engage them.
68. These approaches are more effective in Years 10 and 11 where teaching and learning which are good in Years 7 to 9, improves further and are very good. Very well informed and challenging teaching enables students to grasp well the connection between biographical and historical detail in individual poems. Although students receive encouraging comments on the strengths in their work, advice on how to improve is inconsistent. It is clear and specific in a minority of cases, but elsewhere, there is insufficient guidance on how to improve, or a lack of checking up to ensure that the advice has been followed through.

Leadership and Management

69. Very good leadership has established a dynamic, overarching view of how teaching should develop. Staff have been led as a team to refine their analysis of teaching and learning. Shrewd decisions have been taken to improve the range of styles of activity in class and to match them carefully to the needs of students, following careful checking of their progress. Lesson planning in the large faculty is also managed very efficiently through an enhanced and well delegated pattern of staff organisation. Systems are very well coordinated to check on how well students are doing, to place them in the most advantageous groups, and to intervene where there are weaknesses. There are some difficulties with the access to computers which limit the development of IT skills. Progress since the last inspection is good because the combined effect of these initiatives has been to improve teaching, leading to the recent sharp rise in standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are above average overall. Standards of writing are above average in English, but vary widely across other subjects. In Languages, and religious education, students' confidence to speak and listen is developed well. In history, students' ability to extract information from a text is good. In history and geography, standards are above average because students benefit from frequent opportunities to extend their thinking and understanding through written assignments. In design technology, specialist words are displayed in the classroom, but rarely referred to, so that many chances to develop understanding and improve spelling are missed. In science, standards are below average because opportunities are under exploited to read for information, consolidate ideas through discussion, reporting back and writing up experiments. Helpful guidance on the development of literacy is leading to good outcomes in several areas, but is inconsistently applied.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (French and German)

Provision in modern foreign languages is very good.

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

Leadership	Outstanding
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is outstanding
- Improvements since the last inspection have been very good
- GCSE results in French are well above the national average
- Assessment is particularly good in Year 7 to 9
- Teaching, learning and achievement are very good
- Although GCSE results are in line with the national average, attainment in German is well below that in French

Commentary

Examination results

71. Teacher assessments in 2004 at the end of Year 9 were above the national average reflecting the standards seen. The gap between girls and boys that existed in 2002 has been significantly reduced. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national averages in French and in line with the national average in German also reflecting the standards seen. The 2004 French results are a very large improvement on the last inspection when they were in line with the national average. They are now more than fifty per cent higher than the national average. These results represent a substantial improvement on the last inspection when both teacher assessment and GCSE results were below the national average and part of a falling trend.

Standards and achievement

72. Standards seen in Year 7 to 9 were above the national average. Students understand common classroom instructions and are able to respond to questions spoken at native speaker speed. At the time of the last inspection, students needed plenty of prompts to help them use the foreign language. They no longer do so. They can use simple sentences and they are able to produce short passages describing their likes and dislikes, their favourite foods and about their families. Students can write short passages quite confidently although, when reading aloud or speaking, many have strong English accents. Students are generally more confident using French than they are using German. The result is that the students' basic knowledge of the language is more advanced in French than in German.
73. Standards seen in Years 10 to 11 were also above the national average and have improved significantly. Higher attaining students have a command of the French language that is well above the national average. Students are able to listen and respond to native speakers of both French and German. They do so with some confidence. Most can write fairly complex sentences and have quite a wide vocabulary again especially in French. Although standards are at least above the national average in both languages they are better in French than in German. The department is aware of this relative shortcoming and is currently working on enhancing standards in German so that they can equal those in French. Students in all years achieve very well.

Teaching and learning

74. Teaching and learning are very good although French is somewhat stronger than German. Lessons are well planned with a variety of activities, which ensure that students remain interested and do not lose concentration. Teachers allows students many opportunities for pair and group work so that students who find it difficult to speak French or German to large groups get the chance to speak to one other student. Teachers model the use of language well by using French or German consistently. Students are then obliged to make sense even of that which they do not fully understand. Teachers encourage them to do so by inferring meaning from context and by asking other students to help.
75. Teachers' enthusiasm is often infectious. They create a learning atmosphere that causes students to want to work hard and do well. Teachers use a variety of strategies to do this, for example games, discussions, question and answer sessions, matching exercises, filling in the blanks, listening to recordings and other stimuli. Students do get chances to use ICT although this is somewhat limited because of the lack of readily available computers within the department.

76. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is excellent. Students plot their progress against National Curriculum levels. They understand what each level means and what they have to do to improve their work. In Years 10 and 11 students are very well coached in examination techniques especially in French which partly accounts for the outstanding GCSE results. Students know what they need to do to improve their examination mark.

Leadership and management

77. The leadership of this very successful department is outstanding and inspires teachers to work hard. The faculty has raised its profile around the school quite significantly since the last inspection. Teachers work closely as a team. Management is very good. Documentation, including a comprehensive subject folder, is outstanding with excellent schemes of work. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored through a lesson observation programme, periodic scrutiny of students' work, sharing of good practice during faculty meetings and informal discussions in the modern foreign languages attractive and welcoming base. Teachers feel that they very well supported.
78. The accommodation, which is occasionally small and somewhat old, has been significantly improved through very good displays of students' work and useful language prompts. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good with modern foreign languages now enjoying a high profile in the school because of its teachers, enrichment activities and improved results

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for future development
- Students achieve well and teachers set high expectations for what they can do and understand
- Performance data is used very well to monitor students' progress
- Assessment provides insufficient opportunities for students to assess their own progress and understand what they need to do to get to the next level or grade
- Monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning is insufficiently rigorous

Commentary

Examination results

79. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are above average when compared to all schools nationally and to similar schools. Boys and girls performance is broadly similar. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were in line with those seen nationally. Girls performed slightly better than boys. These results were not as good as last year's, but difficulties with staffing and a weaker cohort largely account for the decline. In 2003 the proportion of students gaining B grades was significantly higher than that seen nationally.

Standards and achievement

80. Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Students enter the school in Year 7 with average attainment and then make better than expected progress by the end of Year 11. Overall achievement is therefore good. More able students take GCSE mathematics at the beginning

of Year 11, and go on to complete GCSE Statistics by the end of the year. Some students in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to study AS mathematics units after school. Students with special educational needs are well supported, and achieve as well as others in their class.

Teaching and Learning

81. Teaching and learning are good overall but is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons teachers' explanations, based on their very good subject knowledge, capture students' interest and imagination. Activities are presented in a lively and engaging way and in contexts that students can understand. For example, in a Year 8 lesson students linked work on perimeter and the use of algebraic expressions to learn how to collect and simplify like terms. In another lesson students enjoyed finding different sets of four whole numbers with a mean of 9 and mode 10. The use of a variety of short, focussed activities ensures high standards of behaviour. In less successful lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, teachers spend too long talking to students and do not give them enough opportunities to discuss and explain their work. Students' work is diligently marked, but often written comments do not tell students clearly enough what they need to do to improve. ICT is used successfully in some lessons to make mathematics more meaningful to students. The faculty provide an impressive range of extra-curricular support for students, including a club for more able students in Year 7, early morning mathematics classes for all Year 11 students, and Saturday morning and holiday schools for Year 9 and Year 11 students.

Leadership and management

82. Leadership of the department is very good and management is good. Teachers have clear roles and responsibilities and work together successfully as a team. The work of the department is monitored, and weaknesses in teaching and learning are identified but this information is not always acted on. Data is used well, including data on exam results, to monitor performance and identify areas of strength and weakness. The department is well resourced, but some of the accommodation is cramped and noisy. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

83. Standards in mathematics across the curriculum are satisfactory. Whole staff training has taken place, and all curriculum areas have identified opportunities for mathematics teaching within their schemes of work. For example, students in geography lessons interpret data presented in a variety of forms, and in science students manipulate formulae to calculate voltage, resistance and current. The mathematics faculty have developed documentation for use by other departments that identifies the way in which mathematics topics should be taught. Students use calculators effectively.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in examinations are above the national averages
- Teaching overall is good but the effective teaching methods used in the good lessons are not being applied in the few weaker lessons
- There is a strong emphasis on practical work which is raising student attainment
- Written work is poorly developed
- The department monitors achievement well and has responded well to changes in the examination board syllabus

Commentary

Examination results

84. Students' results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above the national average. They were also above average at both level 5+ and at the higher level 6+. Boys' results exceeded those of the girls at Level 5 and above which is contrary to the national trend. Over time the results have been consistently above the national average. GCSE results also were above average although unlike results at the end of Year 9 there was no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. Results in 2004 marked a strong improvement on the previous year at all levels including A*-B grades. Students of lower attainment also did well, recording success at grades A*-G.

Standards and achievement

85. Standards overall are above average and students achieve well. Standards exemplified in module tests in Years 7 to 9 and in GCSE and in investigatory coursework in Years 10 and 11 were all above average. The emphasis on practical work is a strong and effective feature of the department. This has been a significant factor in increasing student achievement so that for example 75% of Year 11 achieved a Grade A* to C in coursework in the 2004 exams. The overall standard of written work is more variable. There was some good work, for example on drugs, but much work consisted of short answers and students are not given enough opportunities to develop writing skills.

Teaching and learning

86. Teaching and learning are good overall but this judgement reflects a very wide range in the quality of teaching. Where teaching is very good, there are very good relationships, shown for example in a sensible discussion on human reproduction. The teaching of practical skills is a strength in the department. Demonstrations are done skilfully and are effective, as seen for example in a practical demonstration of neutralisation. Investigative lessons on parachutes, osmosis, and on heating produced a positive impact on student motivation and learning. The department is also just beginning to deploy the advantages of ICT in teaching, having acquired a range of useful demonstration and simulation software. There were some differences between the science subjects in the approach to work. For example, chemists tended to use more active learning techniques and biologists tended to rely on the quality of worksheets. The department is not fully confronting some aspects of teaching that in a minority of classes are less effective. These include not effectively challenging inattentive behaviour, sometimes exacerbating it by the pace of the lesson slowing down and by not matching work to students' abilities.

Leadership and management

87. The department is well led and managed. Strengths include management of coursework, good monitoring of achievement and taking action to improve it. The department effectively provides for the wide range of students in the school. Good enrichment includes trips, clubs and links with primary schools. Health and safety is well managed. The quality of the technical support is very good as is the training of support staff. Accommodation is good. Resources are good and staffing, after a difficult year is now good. Training and induction of new teachers is good. Schemes of work are not yet fully documented and appropriate teaching strategies fully explained. Communication of pupil progress in Year 9 to parents does not provide sufficient detail. Since 1998, quality has been

maintained in a number of areas. There has been improvement in the acquisition of ICT resources. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is good.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers know their subject well and plan their lessons carefully ensuring that learning is good
- Resources are used constructively to focus students' attention on what they need to achieve in lessons
- Teachers support students well in lessons, so they make good progress
- Some ICT rooms have too few computers, some of which are not well maintained, and students have to share equipment in many lessons

Commentary

Examination results

88. The results for teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above average. The number of students achieving level 5 in 2004 increased, although fewer students achieved level 6. The first cohort of students completed the applied vocational GCSE double award in 2004. Results were in line with the national average. Results for the short course GCSE fell in 2004 and were below average. These results were affected by long-term staff absence and inadequate curriculum time allocation.

Standards and achievement

89. Students in Years 7 to 9 understand how to use layers when producing a logo and to manipulate vector and bit-mapped images. Good use is made of digitised images in presentations, which are fully evaluated. Students identify information displayed in various formats and select suitable software to develop their work which they plan well using 'Gantt' charts. Standards are above average and student achievement is good. Improvements in time allocation have raised previous standards in Years 10 and 11 so that they are now above average. Students produce well presented clear accounts of the use of ICT in local companies. They use computers with confidence and switch between software packages competently. Spreadsheets and databases are used appropriately to find solutions to problems which are tested using detailed test plans and supported by comprehensive user guide. Student achievement is satisfactory.

Teaching and Learning

90. All teachers have very good subject knowledge. The best lessons have fast pace and are well planned to suit student learning styles. Students are engrossed by the inspirational way material is presented. Students are encouraged to think about what they are doing and to ask questions which are fielded quickly and accurately. In all lessons a good use of data projectors makes learning objectives clear, so students know exactly what they need to do in their lessons. End of lesson discussions reinforce these objectives. Relevant starter activities focus students' learning. The teachers make their expectations for high standards of behaviour clear and they support students well, both in and outside lesson time. Teaching and learning is good overall, but sometimes learning is affected by the shortage of computers in some rooms so that students cannot work individually. This, and in some

cases, poorly maintained equipment is a barrier to achievement. In a few lessons the pace is slow and a lack of challenge means that some students do not make good progress.

91. Assessment is good. Students know what they have achieved and are given guidance on how to improve. Students also evaluate each other's work and suggest improvements.

Leadership and management

92. The department has begun to emerge from a difficult period when staffing was disrupted and the leadership of the department had not been confirmed. There is a range of documentation which offers teachers good guidance. The management of resources within the department is not as effective as it could be. Whilst the school has more than the average number of computers, access to them is often limited. This is partly due to accommodation, but also due to the way the IT resources are allocated and managed. Leadership and management is satisfactory. Progress since the last inspection also satisfactory and many of the suggested improvements have been made.

ICT across the curriculum

93. There are key staff responsible for ICT in some departments and all departments are supported by training from within the school and by external providers. This has led to an increased use of ICT in some subject areas. In their design technology lessons students are autonomous users of ICT where it is used for computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacture (CAM). ICT is also well used in science lessons. There is effective use of interactive whiteboards to support learning in mathematics and science. In history, religious education and modern foreign languages there is some use of word processing and Internet research, but in geography opportunities are limited because of lack of access to computers. ICT is used for composition in music in Years 7 to 11. In art and English there have been problems in accessing ICT facilities and this is an area undergoing development. The achievement of some special educational needs students has, however, been hampered by the poor management of ICT facilities with the software required for these students not installed and the hardware unavailable.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in History is good.

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

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The informed and enthusiastic teaching engages students' interest and fascination in the subject
- Students achieve well because teachers know them and match work to their needs
- The subject makes an outstanding contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding
- Teacher's marking and record keeping are good so almost all students know what they must do to improve, though there are some inconsistencies in practice
- Students are not sufficiently aware of the importance of evaluating sources in terms of reliability and usefulness

Commentary

Examination results

94. In 2004 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above national expectations. GCSE examination results were below the national average in 2003 but results for 2004 show an improvement in the proportion achieving the higher grades A-C.

Standards and achievement

95. Students' attainment when they join the school is average. At the end of Year 9 standards are above national expectations. Year 7 students showed a sound understanding of chronology, as they learned of events leading to the Norman Conquest. Students' previously completed work shows a good grasp of the relative importance of events and individuals and a developing understanding that these can be interpreted differently. Higher attaining Year 8 students identifying bias in the portraits of Elizabeth Tudor. All Year 9 students use sources to provide supporting evidence for their inferences, although evaluation of such materials is sometimes weak. All students, including those with particular learning needs achieve well.
96. Standards in Year 11 are in line with expectations at this stage of the course, students building upon their prior learning to extend their range of skills. Year 10 students could analyse the causes and effects of the Vietnam War. They understand how and why events have been interpreted differently. Opportunities for essay work allow higher attaining students to use sources more critically and reach conclusions supported with evidence. Students show increasingly mature attitudes to their work and given their attainment when they start the optional history course, overall achievement is good.

Teaching and Learning

97. The teaching and learning observed was good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge, their understanding of course requirements and enthusiasm ensured that students were interested, attentive and able to sustain their concentration. Teachers provided rich descriptions relating one period or event to another and providing interesting details about important figures and events, for example very good use was made of video and other sources as students reviewed the turmoil of England during the Civil Wars. Emotive topics were treated with balance and sensitivity as when Year 11 students reviewed the impact of The Depression on the lives of the people of the United States. Students practice literacy skills, including speaking and listening, in all years. They have the skills necessary for independent learning and collaborated very well. Visits, for example to Warwick Castle and the Imperial War Museum, build students' interest and further enriches learning.
98. Overall, assessment is very good. Students' work is marked regularly, promptly and most often to a high standard. Though there are some inconsistencies in informing students about what they must do to improve. Homework is set regularly and supports the learning.

Leadership and management

99. Excellent, dynamic leadership which has a clear vision for development has established a very competent and enthusiastic team of specialists. Each member plays a prominent part in developments. Schemes of work are detailed and the national strategy for developing teaching in Years 7 to 9 is embedded. History makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development, most notably their appreciation of multicultural issues. Opportunities to promote citizenship are built into the programmes. Planning overall shows clear priorities for future development. Initiatives include the introduction of a wider range of learning strategies to meet better the needs of students. Standards are rising but results do not yet fully reflect the improvements which are being made in the department, so management is very good. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Geography

Provision in geography is good.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teaching is good or very good
- Most students attitudes to learning are very good although a significant minority of boys in Year 11 are disruptive
- Course work is of a consistently high standard
- Procedures for sharing good practice and for the monitoring of teaching and learning have not been appropriately developed
- Field work is used very effectively in many year groups to generate interest and to improve learning

Commentary

Examination Results

100. Students arrive at school with standards in line with the national average. Teacher assessments in 2004 at the end of year 9 indicate attainment well above the national average. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average and the trend over the last three years is upward. Girls GCSE results were significantly better than boys.

Standards and achievement

101. Standards seen were above average by Year 9. This represents good achievement during students' first three years in school. Most students have a good use and understanding of subject specific vocabulary. Many have developed considerable skills of analysis and can interpret data, graphs and diagrams to make appropriate judgements. They can for example draw firm and well founded conclusions from rainfall and temperature graphs and understand the reasons for the distribution and growth of population.
102. By the end of year 11 the skills learned in Year 9 have developed in preparation for GCSE and standards are good. For many students their skills of analysis are now more sophisticated. They are able to use these skills effectively to describe urban land use in and understand reasons for the changes in land use. Most students have a good understanding of the changes that occur as a result of river erosion and are able to describe most of the processes that cause these changes. Key words are emphasised in lessons and good question and answer sessions in many lessons are effective in developing speaking and listening skills. Students achieve well overall, but the development of literacy skills for lower attaining students in geography is a barrier to their progress and the marking of work is not identifying critical areas for development in these students' writing. The development of numeracy skills is good as many students analyse and interpret graphs and basic statistics. Opportunities for students to develop their information technology skills are restricted because of lack of access to computers.

Teaching and learning

103. The overall quality of teaching is good and was very good in some lessons. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Key factors in the good and very good teaching are the good relationships

between staff and students and well informed and knowledgeable staff. Effective planning, the use of a wide range of teaching methods and very good question and answer sessions with students are routine in the good lessons. A significant factor in the good progress made by students in most lessons was the opportunity provided for students to take responsibility for their own learning. All lessons were notable for the active learning and the involvement of the students in their learning. In a very good Year 10 lesson the class teacher used a wide range of activities, ensured that students were responsible for their own work and had clear targets. This approach helps students to achieve high standards in their course work. Students of all abilities were appropriately challenged. In the rare lessons where teaching was not quite so good, the behaviour of a minority of boys caused disruption and was not appropriately managed. In some lessons the work sheets provided were poorly presented and were unclear. Marking of all work, but particularly GCSE work does not always provide information to inform students and does not relate to national curriculum or GCSE levels. Procedures within the department are inconsistently applied. However, closer monitoring of students progress is developing in Years 10 and 11 and appropriate targets are now being set. Field work is being used very effectively in most year groups to generate interest, increase relevance and to improve learning.

Leadership and management

104. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is a clear focus on achievement although opportunities for sharing good practice and for the effective monitoring of teaching and learning have not yet been fully developed. A committed team of staff work very hard to maintain the good standards in the department. Schemes of work are satisfactory working documents and are under constant review. At the moment they do not link clearly with departmental assessment procedures or identify extension work for the higher attaining students. Nor do they identify how ICT will be used. The department development plan identifies clear and appropriate areas for improvement but does not identify clearly enough how targets will be met. The use of ICT is still underdeveloped and assessment is not consistently providing appropriate information for students. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Progress since last inspection	Very good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use very good subject knowledge and create positive classroom relationships to make students' discussions thought provoking and productive
- Lively, interesting activities keep students fully involved in lessons so that they achieve well
- Students do not fully understand the levels at which they are working or what they must do to improve
- The highest attainers are not being stretched

Commentary

Examination results

105. All Year 11 students take the GCSE short course. Results were above the national average in 2003 and 2004. In both years girls did significantly better than boys. The proportion of students gaining grades A* or A was below that obtained nationally.

Standards and achievement

106. Students enter the school with standards that are in line with national expectations. Present standards in Year 9 are above the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and students achieve well. Year 9 students have acquired a sound knowledge of major religions. They use it to consider complex human experiences such as the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis. During the GCSE course students reach above average standards. They can present written arguments more convincingly and with a wider evidence base. Year 11 students can examine global problems such as uneven wealth distribution, from the viewpoint of different religions. Achievement remains good overall. In all Years, students’ listening and speaking skills are good. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others.

Teaching and learning

107. Teaching observed ranged from excellent to satisfactory but overall was good. The most effective lessons were action-packed and used high quality, unusual resources to make sure that all students participated and remained motivated. Also, extensive subject knowledge was skilfully used to ask questions that made students think for themselves. Discussions took place in an open, yet respectful atmosphere. Students felt secure in presenting their knowledge and opinions to the teacher and to each other. Throughout the school writing frames help lower attaining students to achieve well but higher attainers are not given specific written tasks to make them work to full capacity. Learning in lessons was also less successful when teachers did too much talking, or did not deal effectively with silly, disruptive behaviour. Years 7, 8 and 9 are not allocated the nationally recommended curriculum time so lesson content has to be over-ambitious at times. Homework tasks encourage students’ independent learning. Examples include reviewing the morality of personal responses to daily life situations, and doing internet research. Assessment is used to set targets but students are pre-occupied with National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. Students are not clear how to use their strengths or exactly what to do to attack weaknesses in their work.

Leadership and management

108. Full-time subject specialists have joined the department relatively recently, and good leadership and management have already established a team spirit and common aspirations. There is commitment to improvement and innovation that has driven the department forward. Very good progress since the last inspection has raised standards. The quality of teaching has improved and there is a range of very good teaching methods. Teachers are not observing each other to share this expertise. Schemes of work have been completely overhauled to provide a balanced curriculum. The subject makes a very strong contribution to students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is currently being developed to meet the needs of boys and girls equally. Christian based clubs meet at lunchtimes but students do not visit local places of worship or hear speakers from different faiths.

DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology consists of food, electronics, and textiles, resistant materials, systems and control, engineering and graphic products courses, taught throughout years 7 to 11.

Provision in design technology is very good.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in textiles, food technology and graphic products are very good and are better than those in resistant materials and systems and control
- Some excellent and very good teaching is stimulating the students' interest, and is encouraging them to work hard and raising standards
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge and expertise enable all students to achieve well
- Students and teachers relate very well to each other and students are supportive of each other
- Students do not always know what they have to do to improve and reach the next level

Commentary

Examination results

109. Teacher assessments at the end of year 9 are above average in comparison with national standards. Standards at GCSE in the 2004 examinations were above average overall, but vary within the individual subjects that make up design and technology. They are well above average in textiles, food technology and graphic products. Standards in resistant materials were in line with the national average and those in systems and control were below. Girls achieve better than boys. This is because more boys take resistant materials and systems and control than girls.

Standards and achievement

110. Students join the school with levels of attainment in line with national expectations. By the end of Year 9 standards have improved. They are above the national average and students achieve well. Standards in Years 10 and 11 broadly reflect the examination results. The systems and control course has been replaced with the more successful electronics which has further improved standards. In Year 11 engineering, the students were able to disassemble a 3 pin plug and evaluate the purpose, structure and resilience of the components. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11. This represents good achievement overall.

Teaching and learning

111. Teaching is good across the department, although it ranges from excellent to satisfactory. It is best in textiles, food technology and graphic products. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this means that they explain the work clearly and concisely. Where it is most effective, teachers share their enthusiasm for the subject and motivate the students to learn well. In a Year 10 graphic products lesson for example, the teacher managed to fire the students' enthusiasm for designing information packs for the Olympic Games. Interest was maintained through the use of individual and paired work, research and practical activities. This variety of approaches and teacher expertise led to excellent learning. A well structured assessment system, which has an element of student self assessment, has been introduced which is linked to national curriculum levels so that students know their working levels. Standards are not as high as they could be because students are not then told what to do to improve. The teachers have developed good working relationships with the students and most strive to ensure that rooms are stimulating environments. This means that there is a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons and that they are interesting places in which to learn. In response to supportive teaching students work hard and behave well.

Leadership and management

112. The department has developed good strategies to overcome shortages of specialist staff. Links with teacher training institutions have been forged and the school is committed to assist with their work through the Graduate Teacher Programme. Very good leadership and management of the department has critically reviewed performance and evaluated the appropriateness of the courses. As a result less successful courses have been axed to build on the strengths of the more successful courses. The

department is well organised and the teachers form a committed and well motivated team. Progress identified in the last report has been sustained and developed well.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama

113. Work in drama was sampled. Standards of practical drama are good. Students learn well to work together in small teams. They examine and explore complex emotional and social issues and use them thoughtfully as a basis for dramatic action. This follows from well directed teacher prompting and questioning which are both sensitive and analytical. Students achieve well, because teachers challenge them with high demands on their levels of concentration and acting skills. Teachers structure lessons to make students highly productive. This is because they train them well to use defined frameworks and styles. At the same time, students benefit from being given the personal responsibility to apply imagination and creativity to their scenes.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The consistently good teaching, results in good achievement throughout the school
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well to meet the needs of the examinations in Years 10 and 11
- Relationships between teachers and students are positive and students' behaviour is good
- The extensive exhibition of students work around the school and very good enrichment opportunities successfully promote their social and cultural development
- The planning of lessons for the most able students in Years 7 to 9 does not sufficiently challenge them
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not provide enough opportunities for students to work with three dimensional media or to develop their creative skills using ICT

Commentary

Examination results

114. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 in Art and Design were above average and an improvement on 2003. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average. Girls achieved significantly better results than the boys who achieved slightly below the national average.

Standards and achievement

115. The attainment of students on entry to the school in Year 7 is in line with the national average although many have limited experience of art and design. Throughout Years 7 to 9 they develop good practical skills in drawing, painting and colour media, collage and print as well as an introduction to construction media. They are appropriately introduced to the works of noted artists and cultural traditions such as African and Aboriginal art. By the end of Year 9 all students have made good progress and achieve above average standards, particularly in painting and other colour media. As a result of limited access to a wider range of three dimensional media and to computers, students' skills are less well developed in using these processes.
116. In Years 10 and 11 students made good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding of art and design and achieve well. They are able to produce comprehensive portfolios of work showing a clear line of enquiry from conception to outcome, using sketchbooks soundly to record their ideas and observations. Many students show good drawing and colour handling skills and produce work of an impressive standard, particularly in a decorative, abstract style inspired by the study of artists and cultures. Displays around the building, the range of learning experiences and the extensive enrichment programme effectively promote the students social and cultural development. Overall students show positive attitudes, work hard and are increasingly independent as they progress through the school.

Teaching and Learning

117. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers used their very good subject knowledge to provide activities that students enjoyed and were well motivated by. Starter activities were well

designed to quickly engage students' attention and were carefully linked to the main content of the lessons. Teachers' practical demonstrations and use of visual resources were effective in many lessons. Lesson planning was generally good but the match of content and strategies for learning did not always sufficiently challenge the most able students. Teachers give good individual support for all students in lessons were always encouraging and as a result students achieved well. The display of students work and visual reference materials in all art rooms is attractive and aids learning through constant exemplification of standards and also key words in literacy. Assessment is used well to give individual feedback to students but day to day marking of work is inconsistent in detailing what they must do to improve. Teachers promote good relationships with the students and as a result lessons are orderly, hardworking and relaxed.

Leadership and management

118. The department is led well and works well as a team. Responsibilities are spread across the teaching staff so that important aspects such as the Gifted and Talented provision and ICT are appropriately managed. Day to management processes is undertaken efficiently and there is a good plan for subject improvement based upon an analysis of examination results and performance management. The accommodation although very cramped for the numbers is well managed and cared for. The technicians are deployed well to carry out routine maintenance and teacher support. The extra curricular enrichments programme is a real strength and brings much to the life of the school and a high profile for the subject. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is very good.

	Year 7, 8 and 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- Students' individual musical strengths and interests are very carefully developed and this leads to impressive examination results
- Outstanding leadership and organisation mean that every aspect of provision runs smoothly even in the absence of the head of department
- The versatility and commitment of teachers results in an outstanding range of extracurricular activities to enrich students' social and cultural lives

Commentary

Examination results

119. The results of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2004 were very high. All students gained grades A* to C, as they have done for several years.

Standards and achievement

120. In Year 9, students have a confident working knowledge of the elements of music prescribed in the National Curriculum. In steel band performances, for example, they maintain as a class a steady pulse. Rhythms are precise and dynamics are well controlled to produce well-balanced and accurate performances. Students achieve well in relation to their average starting points in music in the school. A conspicuous strength in Year 11 is students' skills in improvisation. These enable

students to compose fluently and confidently. GCSE students are mostly accomplished instrumentalists or singers. This leads to very good achievement because they are enthusiastically furthering an established creative interest. Composing shows a firm grasp of style and structure, and students demonstrate a very good understanding of vocal and instrumental characteristics. The use of technical language is precise throughout the subject, and music makes a good contribution to the development of students' literacy. Their knowledge of different eras and styles in music is above average.

Teaching and learning

121. The overall good quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is further improved in Years 10 and 11 where it is very good. The teachers are accomplished and experienced musicians who bring to their work an obvious enthusiasm which strongly motivates students and stimulates their learning. Teachers are aware of students' capabilities and plan very well to challenge them over the whole range of ability. This is reinforced by the high quality of individual assistance students receive in lessons. Time is carefully apportioned to tasks to ensure a brisk and efficient learning. Class ensembles are expertly directed. Learning and achievement were exceptional in a Year 11 lesson where students practised a salsa piece. Instructions were precise, demonstrations impeccable, and students made huge gains in understanding and skill within the lesson. The task was carefully planned to make the best use of students' different strengths. Very good assessment procedures ensure that students know how well they are achieving and what they must do to improve.

Leadership and management

122. The inspection took place during the temporary absence of the head of department. Nevertheless, every aspect of provision remained highly organised and purposeful implying that leadership overall was excellent. Schemes of work are very good. Extensive knowledge and understanding are acquired through worthwhile musical experiences. Music makes an excellent contribution to students' social and cultural development, including many opportunities to extend their multicultural understanding. Extra-curricular provision is exceptional. Nineteen ensembles rehearse and perform regularly to high standards in school and in the community. Over 200 students receive instrumental tuition. The school's musicians contribute significantly to selective youth ensembles in the local education authority. A more consistently high quality of teaching and an extended range of extra-curricular provision are very good developments since the last inspection. Music remains a major strength of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is good.

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

Leadership	No judgement
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between students and teachers encourage full participation in all activities
- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the use of increasingly difficult skills practice which help students to attain good standards

- The flexible approach to participation in the curriculum offered to students with special needs, particularly those with physical disabilities, ensures that all students have equal opportunities to achieve success
- The indoor accommodation hinders the development of high standards in many activities, for example basketball and badminton
- Much of the department documentation is out of date and does not provide a sound resource for development or reflect the good work of the department

Commentary

Examination results

123. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2004 were above average, and in relation to their prior attainment, all the students in this cohort made better progress than expected. This reflects the trend of previous years.

Standards and achievement

124. Standards in the present Year 9 are generally above average, with some students in some activities working beyond this level and others working at the nationally expected level. For example, in netball a Year 9 group showed well-developed spatial awareness and a good level of footwork and ball handling skills, while a basketball group had some difficulty in maintaining control and accuracy of passing in a game. In Year 11 the above average standards of GCSE students reflect the results of previous year groups, particularly in football, netball and rugby. In these games students showed a mature grasp of tactical play as well as good controlled skills of passing and receiving the ball. This good standard of play was also seen in a “core” physical education lesson and is reflected in the results of local, area and county-wide matches. Achievement is good throughout all year groups, with a particular strength in the way the curriculum is manipulated to ensure that all students with special needs are enabled to achieve success alongside their peers.

Teaching and learning

125. Overall teaching and learning is good through all year groups and examples of very good and excellent teaching were also seen. In the majority of lessons there were high expectations of participation and concentration and probing questions were asked to extend students’ knowledge and understanding. These factors all led to good learning. On the few occasions where students were not sufficiently challenged or expectation of attention was low, learning was less good. All teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the activities and are adept at using progressive practices which enable students to acquire skills. The staff have also made the two gymnasias as bright and attractive as possible with well presented posters, including key words and technical terms, which are used during lessons to extend students’ knowledge and vocabulary. Nevertheless, the condition and size of the indoor accommodation available for physical education severely limits the development of high level skills in sports such as basketball and badminton.

Leadership and management

126. No judgement has been made on leadership, since the post has only been filled on a temporary basis for the last few weeks. Day to day management is good and the department has continued to function successfully and maintain a good standard of work. It has been particularly successful in promoting literacy through the publication of sports newsletters and information. A very good range of extra-curricular sport is offered which range from sessions dedicated to beginner swimmers to opportunities to play a variety of sports at school, area and national level. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

127. The school provides a range of courses which include Economics, Health and Social Care, and Media Studies. These are part of the school's very good development of work related learning. These were not reported subjects, although engineering is reported in the Design Technology section.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Satisfactory	Insufficient evidence
Achievement	Satisfactory	Insufficient evidence
Teaching and learning	Good	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work in citizenship in Years 7 to 9 is very well led, well managed, and well resourced
- The students in Years 7 to 9 enjoy the timetabled programme and make good progress
- The structure in Years 10 and 11 is not as well organised and students meet the subject for less time than in Years 7 to 9
- Effective assessment of the students' work against specific learning objectives is too infrequent to help them focus well on what they can do to improve

Commentary

Examination results

128. There are no formal examinations in this subject at the end of Year 11.

Standards and achievement

129. Students in Years 7 to 9 study citizenship for a one-hour lesson per week and has replaced a previous course on personal, social and health education (PSHE). The students express a more positive attitude to citizenship than they did to PSHE. They enjoy what they do, progress well, and gain a satisfactory knowledge of what they study - such as the provision and types of public service, the part played by the voluntary sector (including the part many of them play themselves), and their responsibilities and duties in our society. During these three years, the students' overall knowledge reaches national expectations and some also gain a good enough understanding to be able to suggest how a public service they've not heard of may work. All are stretched to an extent, especially those with weaknesses in English or with other additional learning needs – however, those who find learning easy tend to coast along.
130. In Years 10 and 11, students do not have special citizenship lessons but meet aspects of the subject in rather bitty ways: formally sometimes within their RE course and in tutor group time (where it still has the name PSHE), in occasional "citizenship days" for a whole year-group, and from time to time in some of their other subjects. Students grow in their reasoned approach to voluntary activities and can balance their rights and duties as citizens. Some limited work was seen but this was insufficient to make a secure judgement on standards.

Teaching and learning

131. Students are often taught by their form teachers, who have a satisfactory grasp of the work and how to approach it, have developed good relationships, and have high expectations. The programme encourages fast moving lessons, a very good range of teaching methods, approaches and resources – including practised speakers from other organisations and thoughtful contributions from sixth formers. Work is well marked but not graded against any form of target.

Leadership and management

132. The subject is very well led in view of the large number of teachers involved in the programme – those teachers care about their work in this area, contribute their own ideas, and effectively help the programme to develop. There is a clear view of how citizenship should develop. The work is focussed and resourced. A start has been made on computerising the results of the students' end of unit tests, although it is less clear how the results should be used. The work in Years 10 and 11 meets the current national requirements.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003. It only includes results for students who did not then go on to complete the full A Level course.

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	16	100.0	80.1	25.0	23.7	37.5	29.9
Biology	19	57.9	65.2	21.1	11.1	22.6	20.6
Business Studies	1	100.0	76.4	100.0	16.3	50.0	26.2
Chemistry	5	80.0	72.7	40.0	13.9	40.0	24.1
Communication Studies	7	85.7	86.4	0.0	23.8	30.0	32.0
Drama	1	100.0	86.5	0.0	19.6	30.0	30.6
English / English Language	9	66.7	82.9	11.1	17.5	18.9	28.7
English Literature	5	80.0	85.9	40.0	19.1	32.0	30.2
French	1	100.0	78.2	0.0	18.9	20.0	27.6
Design and Technology	4	75.0	74.9	0.0	15.1	30.0	25.3
General Studies	74	45.9	73.9	4.1	17.8	13.0	25.7
Geography	17	82.4	74.3	11.8	19.8	25.9	26.5
German	2	100.0	81.5	0.0	19.3	25.0	28.9
History	10	80.0	80.7	20.0	19.5	30.0	28.6
Information Technology	10	50.0	67.0	20.0	10.9	21.0	21.4
Mathematics	14	57.1	61.9	14.3	17.1	21.4	22.1
Music	1	100.0	100.0	0.0	21.4	30.0	30.7
Other Languages	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	42.9	60.0	36.2
Other Sciences	1	0.0	71.4	0.0	15.8	0.0	24.3
Other Social Studies	20	75.0	69.7	20.0	16.7	23.5	24.1
Physics	4	50.0	68.6	25.0	14.4	22.5	22.7
Sociology	12	58.3	71.8	16.7	18.4	20.8	25.4
Sports/PE studies	4	100.0	73.2	25.0	11.4	35.0	23.1

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003. It includes the results of all students who completed the full A Level course in the subject.

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	24	100.0	98.6	29.2	50.2	80.8	87.5
Biology	15	100.0	96.4	26.7	39.2	73.3	78.6
Business studies	7	100.0	98.7	71.4	36.8	97.1	80.1
Chemistry	7	100.0	97.6	42.9	49.0	82.9	84.9
Communication Studies	11	100.0	99.4	27.3	37.8	76.4	82.1
Drama	3	100.0	99.5	0	40.1	80.0	83.6
English / English Language	6	100.0	99.4	33.3	36.3	80.0	80.9
English Literature	18	100.0	95.6	66.7	46.5	95.6	86.5
French	1	100.0	80.0	0	51.5	80.0	87.6
Design and Technology	19	100.0	97.8	21.1	35.0	72.6	77.9
General Studies	42	100.0	94.7	40.5	31.0	82.9	73.1
Geography	27	100.0	98.7	40.7	44.5	80.0	84.0
German	1	100.0	98.4	0	47.9	80.0	84.8
History	24	100.0	99.0	16.7	44.6	71.7	84.6
Information Technology	16	100.0	95.6	25.0	24.6	67.5	69.5
Mathematics	17	100.0	96.7	47.1	55.6	83.5	88.8
Music	5	100.0	98.8	40.0	38.9	88.0	81.1
Other Languages	3	100.0	96.9	66.7	64.5	100.0	93.8
Other Social Studies	41	100.0	97.4	48.8	42.7	83.9	81.8
Physics	7	100.0	96.7	0.0	44.6	62.9	81.7
Sociology	19	100.0	98.2	57.9	44.3	89.5	83.6
Sports/PE studies	13	100.0	98.0	23.1	30.9	70.8	70.8
VCE Business	21	92.9	65.0	7.1	14.6	59.5	60.1
VCE Engineering	3	100.0	n/a	33.3	n/a	86.7	n/a
VCE Health and Social Care	16	96.8	63.5	29.0	14.5	76.8	63.5
VCE Science	2	100.0	58.5	0.0	3.7	50.0	58.5
VCE Information Technology	31	98.4	64.9	14.5	23.4	70.6	64.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

133. English literature and modern foreign languages were the focus for this inspection. English language was sampled. Teaching and learning in the English language lessons seen were good, leading to good student achievement. Students translate Elizabethan texts into modern English skilfully, well briefed from teachers' very good subject knowledge and thoughtful use of stimulating visual presentations to help them focus their thinking.

ENGLISH

Provision in English is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers deploy very good subject knowledge and high expectations, to brief students and draw out their understanding
- Leadership and management ensure that teaching approaches and ideas are shared well, leading to well above average levels of student performance
- Students' attitudes to work are excellent, which underpin very good achievement and their ability to think independently
- Advice to students on how to improve written work lacks detail

Commentary

Examination results

134. GCE results rose from average to well above average overall in English literature in 2003. The proportion gaining higher grades of A and B was also well above the national average, and boys' and girls' standards were similar. In 2004 results improved again.

Standards and achievement

135. In Year 12, students read Shakespeare with rapidly growing insight, focussed by very well set written assignments. For example, one group was confronted constructively with a variety of competing critical viewpoints, which they absorbed and examined very well. They knew how to exploit them to extend their own understanding, while refining and articulating their original views with informed, detailed references. By Year 13, students' standards are well above average. They acquire a good grasp of the key details in modern novels and poetry, following very thorough teaching. Students make assured and perceptive judgements on central themes and ideas, developing a highly mature personal response to what they read. Their insights into the development and growth of characters are independent, thoughtful and searching. They demonstrate a very subtle grasp of relevant social attitudes underlying the plays they study. They consider and interpret aptly the contemporary meaning of Elizabethan language, explaining clearly its emotional significance, use of classical allusion and dramatic significance. This is because teachers draw out and question their understanding in activities with rising levels of challenge. In consequence, they ensure that students combine very good achievement with high levels of confidence.

Teaching and Learning

136. Teachers use very good subject knowledge to prompt and brief students. Their authoritative questioning is sensitive, yet demanding, and consolidates students' understanding very well in both

years. It also exploits the excellent attitudes which students bring to their work and develops their ability to discuss and learn independently. As a result of high expectations and suitable challenge, students are adept at debating, comparing and sharing ideas, and explaining their views with detailed reference to the texts. Students benefit from conscientious marking of their written work. It locates and explains their strengths well, although advice given on how to improve is lacking in detail.

Leadership and management

137. Leadership carries a very strong vision, which has underpinned continuing expansion of the subject through a curriculum offering greater student choice in what is studied. Management has ensured that teachers work very well together as a team to share successful approaches in the classroom, and apply the benefits of training. Lesson planning is co-ordinated very productively so that the team of teachers has jointly adopted improved methods of teaching, leading to the recent rise in standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

138. Students' English language and literacy skills are consistently good. Students can write fairly complex texts confidently. In geography students are able to write well when analysing sophisticated data. They are able to communicate articulately using complex sentence structure. Their speaking and listening skills are of a high standard. Students read a variety of texts skilfully and they can infer meaning even when the text is quite complex. In science students can explain what they are doing in language appropriate to the listener despite the complexity of what they are trying to explain. Students can use subject specific vocabulary accurately. In physical education students speak about their fluently although opportunities for extended writing are insufficient.

French

Provision in French is good.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good
- Students achieve well
- Teachers make very good use of up to date resources
- Students' speaking skills are less well developed
- The use of assessment is inconsistent in Year 12

Commentary

Examination results

139. Numbers of students taking French in recent years have been very small, and are insufficient to make valid comparisons with national figures. Over the past three years the pass rate has been 100% in the A2 examination.

Standards and achievement

140. Standards attained by students in both Years 12 and 13 are above average. Year 12 students can express their opinions about the topics that they are studying, for example the conflict between generations, and justify them with relevant illustrations. In Year 13, students can understand native French speakers discussing current affairs topics at a normal speed, and can use relatively

complex constructions in their writing. Students do not take sufficient opportunities to practise their speaking skills, which are consequently weaker than their comprehension and writing skills. Overall, however, students make good progress, and in Year 13 in particular they show that they are coping very well with the demands of studying French at this level.

Teaching and learning

141. The quality of teaching is good, and in Year 13 it is very good. Teachers provide a very good model for their students in their use of French as the normal mode of communication in the classroom. They make use of a good range of activities and teaching resources, such as films, tapes and documents. In the Year 13 lesson observed, the teacher maintained a challenging pace, and showed a very good understanding of students' individual learning needs. The students' knowledge and understanding of a contemporary topic (the origins of the extreme right in French politics) and their grasp of the language of political discussion, developed considerably. However, despite expert prompting from their teachers, students in both year groups are somewhat reluctant to participate in class discussion in French. Teachers do not consistently give sufficient written feedback to Year 12 students about their work, with the result that they are not always sure of the standards they are attaining, or of what they should do to improve.

Leadership and management

142. The leadership of the department shows a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and has taken very effective steps to remedy the latter. Schemes of work provide a most comprehensive account of coverage of skills and topics, as well as detailed and up to date references to supporting materials which teachers and students can access. The school library contains a good range of dictionaries, reference and textbooks, and French periodicals. Good relations have been established with the school which shares the teaching of French in the sixth form, and combining classes in Year 12 has significantly increased the opportunities for group work and discussion.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress and achieve well in Years 12 and 13
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge
- Students are very well motivated and work hard
- Assessment practices are very good, ensuring that students know how well they are doing and what they should do to improve
- The use of ICT to support students' learning is insufficiently developed

Commentary

Examination results

143. Results in AS and A2 mathematics in 2003 were broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of students gaining A and B grades at AS level rose dramatically in 2004. At A2 the figure improved slightly.

Standards and achievement

144. Standards of work seen are average. However, many students gain grades beyond those that would be expected given their GCSE results. This is very good achievement, and is a result of the high expectations of specialist teachers, and the students' very good work ethic.

Teaching and Learning

145. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Lessons are well planned and in the best cases students are involved actively in their learning, discussing and developing mathematical techniques, which they apply to new situations. Students are very well supported by their teachers, who give unstintingly of their time to help individuals who are having difficulty with their work. Students are given challenging targets, but feel confident that they can meet them. Extra curricular opportunities include after school Mechanics lessons, and off-site provision of Further Mathematics modules. The very good relationships between students and their teachers are an important factor in the good achievement.

Leadership and management

146. Leadership of mathematics is very good and management is good. Very effective teachers work closely together to deliver a range of mathematics modules. Data are used very well to monitor students' progress and ensure that each individual achieves as well as he or she can. Since the last inspection the department has worked hard to maintain the very good quality of provision.

Mathematics across the curriculum

147. Standards in mathematics across the curriculum are satisfactory. For example photography students calculate camera exposures and work out the correct weights of processing chemicals, whilst English students develop a secure understanding of the iambic pentameter structure in Elizabethan verse.

SCIENCE

148. The focus of the inspection was chemistry. Biology and physics were sampled. One lesson was seen in each subject of the two subjects sampled. The quality of teaching in each lesson was satisfactory. In 2003 the AS biology results were above the national average and the A2 biology results were in line with the national average. Very few took the AS physics examination in 2003 and all obtained pass grades. All students taking physics A2 in 2003 attained a pass grade although no student obtained the higher grades of A and B.

CHEMISTRY

Provision in chemistry is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students make very good progress and all gained an A2 pass in 2003
- Teachers are very well qualified and use their subject expertise to deliver carefully structured and challenging lessons to which students respond with interest
- Students achieve very well because teachers respond well to their learning needs
- Resources are very good; enabling students to experience well organised practical chemistry in pleasant surroundings

- Departmental procedures are not formalised including the development of the scheme of work to extend the use of ICT

Commentary

Examination results

149. A2 results were average in 2003. The results rose in 2004, with students doing much better than predicted on the basis of their attainment at the start of Year 12. The course attracts students with a wide range of abilities, and standards on entry to the course are below average.

Standards and achievement

150. Standards in lessons seen were above average. Year 13 students used their knowledge of organic chemistry to predict the reactions of acryl chlorides and acid anhydrides. They were prepared to take intellectual risks when attempting to explain the mechanism of the reactions they had observed. Students achieve very well because they respond to the demands of the course with hard work and thorough concentration. They are well supported by their teachers if they have difficulties.

Teaching and Learning

151. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach it with obvious enthusiasm. Lessons are very carefully structured so that chemical ideas are developed logically. This was evident in a Year 12 lesson on the naming of organic compounds. Teachers constantly ask searching questions to challenge and assess what students understand. They prepare students very well for examinations. In a Year 12 revision lesson students were helped to develop the study skills required to apply their knowledge and understanding to examination questions. Students enjoy the practical work that they do and find that it helps them understand the theoretical parts of the course. They have a very positive attitude to their learning and appreciate the support they get from their teachers at all times. They find studying chemistry interesting, challenging and rewarding.

Leadership and management

152. Leadership of the department is good because it clearly aims to enable students to achieve to the best of their ability. Relationships show mutual respect and teachers provide good role models. The department runs smoothly on a day to day basis, but there is a need to develop the scheme of work further to include a wider variety of approaches including ICT. Although procedures are clear, the department is aware that they need formalising. Chemistry was not mentioned specifically in the last report but improvements have been good. In the last three years numbers studying the subject have risen, the range of student ability has widened and results have improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

153. Students currently have a choice of either AVCE ICT or AS and A2 computing (which replaced the AS and A2 ICT course in September 2004). This report focuses on the AVCE course. The AS computing course was sampled. The teaching and learning seen were very good. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and a good relationship with the students. Lesson planning is very good and appropriate to the needs of the students who achieve very well. Students are challenged by the activities in lessons and the standard of the students' work is well above average.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Very Good
Teaching and learning	Very Good
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the examination board requirements for coursework and work with students to improve the standard of their work
- Teachers make good use of resources to support their teaching
- Teachers continually review sixth form courses to ensure students have a good choice to suit their needs

Commentary

Examination results

154. AVCE results were well above average in 2003. The 2004 results show improvement with an increased number of students achieving grades A and B and all students achieving A to E.

Standards and achievement

155. Students work well in lessons, they show enthusiasm and commitment and achieve very well given their attainment on entry to the course. When designing a web page they are able to identify their potential user and evaluate other web sites and relate them to a target audience. They have a good knowledge of HTML and java script and are able to use this appropriately to develop their individual projects. Coursework is well presented with a good use of screen dumps to demonstrate research. During the implementation of their coursework stages of development are clearly annotated. All coursework is word-processed and these accounts show careful planning with a stepwise development in a logical sequence. Students appreciate the support received from their teachers both in and outside lessons. With teachers' help students are able to identify the stage of development of their coursework and prioritise tasks to meet examination board criteria.

Teaching and Learning

156. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and they have a clear understanding of how coursework is assessed by the examination board. This is conveyed to the students and supported by clear examples using very good resources. Some teaching is didactic but the delivery is enthusiastic, making it very effective. Explanations are clear, unambiguous and relevant. The teachers have good relationships with the students and use humour and praise to encourage student response to questions. All students receive individual mentoring in lessons, with support also available outside lessons. Students of all abilities achieve well. Higher ability students are encouraged to develop their work and less able students are given additional guidance where needed to improve the standard of their work. Work is well marked. Students know the grade they have achieved for each piece of work and are given clear written guidelines on what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

157. Suitable courses for sixth form students are continually reviewed and delivered by a strong team of teachers who work together sharing resources and experiences. All have a good understanding of coursework requirements and this is internally moderated. Assessment is well managed.
158. Since the last inspection the delivery of ICT in the sixth form has improved. In all lessons seen teaching and learning were very good. Improvement since the last inspection in has been good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

159. The use of ICT in business studies is excellent. It is used in all lessons and all assignment research is linked through relevant web sites. In geography ICT is well used for coursework, which includes some data handling, however elsewhere opportunities for using ICT to support this subject are being missed. There is good use of ICT in the photography course, but little in mainstream art. In chemistry data loggers are used, but a lack of technical support has meant that the interactive whiteboard and some subject specific software has yet to be installed. In other subject areas the use of ICT is developing, although in English there is little use beyond word processing.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focus was on geography and psychology. One history lesson was sampled. The quality of teaching in the sampled lesson was very good. Students respond very well and their achievement was consequently very good.

Geography

Provision in geography is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good
- There is a high standard of course work and students use data very well to support their work
- Some opportunities to provide students with more responsibility for their learning are being missed

Commentary

Examination results

160. In 2003 the A2 results were in line with the national average but decreased slightly in 2004. Students in both years achieved well relative to their ability and better overall than they did in other subjects. Girls achieved better than boys.

Standards and achievement

161. Year 13 students' standards are just above average and students are achieving well. They have a good knowledge of patterns and trends in world population and are able to apply this knowledge to an understanding of some of the contemporary issues linked to this. They also have a good understanding of the factors affecting global warming. They use a range of data very well and make good judgements using this data. Their map work and their ability to use photographic evidence are good. Their investigative skills are sound but are limited by restricted use of computers in lessons although there is increasing encouragement for students to use ICT for research purposes. The standard of work overall of students in Year 12 is average, but they achieve well and attain higher standard particularly in their investigative studies based on field work in north Wales. Their studies are very well structured and presented and students use a wide range of data and some sophisticated analysis of the data to support their findings.

Teaching and learning

162. Teaching is consistently good. Lessons have a clear structure and resources are used effectively. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this very effectively with students in well directed question and answer sessions where good support is provided for students of all abilities. Some opportunities are being missed for students to take responsibility for their work and to further develop their investigative skills. Most work is regularly marked although not enough information is always provided to help students improve their work or to set targets related to examination levels. There are satisfactory opportunities for students to practise examination questions. Students are attentive and work well in response to the good teaching.

Leadership and management

163. Leadership is satisfactory and the course is well organised with a good range of resources available. Day to day management is good. There is no specific development plan for the sixth form.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths

- Examination results are above the national average
- Students achieve better than expected
- Teaching is very good and students are very committed learners
- The leadership of the department is determined to raise standards further

Commentary

Examination results

164. In the A2 results in 2003, half of entrants gained A or B grades which is above the national average. The results in 2004 were not significantly different. All students gained A to E grades in both 2003 and 2004. A broadly similar picture holds for results at AS in both years. The exam results are particularly good given the large numbers taking the subject in 2004.

Standards and achievement

165. The psychology department is consistently successful. Given the numbers taking the subject and their very limited knowledge on entry to the course, students achieve very well. Students rapidly develop key skills of evidence and data analysis, critical evaluation, and rational explanation using psychological terminology. A Year 13 class was learning about different psychological models, cognitive, behaviourist, biological and psychodynamic, to explain behaviour. After 20 minutes all of the groups in the class were successful in applying the models they had been allocated to the scenario under consideration, and could explain their reasoning to the others.

Teaching and learning

166. Teaching is consistently very good. It is characterised by very good subject knowledge, dynamic presentation which captures students' interest, and very good classroom strategies which give students experience of learning in different ways. Teachers use questions very well to assess the extent of each individual's understanding. Very helpful marking of work matches the level of students' understanding so they all know exactly what to do to improve. The teaching of key examination skills and active learning play a large part in students' achievement. A Year 12 class was learning about human memory. Groups of three took it in turns to correct and add to what the others had written. This led to the students taking responsibility for each other's learning, and in so doing gaining a much more detailed and secure understanding of the psychological concepts involved. Students are consistent in the positive view they have of the psychology provision. They work very hard in lessons, often making significant contributions to each others' learning, by bringing in knowledge they have gained from their own reading of research, and through marking of

each other's work. There is a climate of mutual respect, so that challenges to each other's views (and those of the teachers) make lessons very lively. They see psychology as particularly relevant to them.

Leadership and management

167. The leadership's advocacy of the value of psychology is shared by all teachers, who have high aspirations for student achievement. There is good monitoring of student progress but targets for lower attainers are not sharp enough to enhance their achievement. Monitoring of teaching is good, leading to consistency between teachers.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design. Media studies, music and theatre were sampled. Teaching seen was good in media studies and very good in music and theatre studies. Students achieve well in media studies and very well in music and theatre studies.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is good.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching results in good achievement
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well to meet the needs of the examinations in Years 12 and 13 and as a consequence students achieve good standards
- ICT is used effectively in photography to develop creative ideas and innovative visual effects
- The very good programme of national and international study visits improves students' knowledge of art and design history but some students show a limited awareness of influential artists and designers in making their own work

Commentary

Examination results

168. In the 2003 A2 examinations results were in line with the national average. Boys achieved results above those attained nationally whilst the girls were below those gained by girls nationally. In 2004 the examination results improved upon the previous year. Over recent years success has been consistent at A2 with virtually all students gaining an award at grades A to E. Art and design consists of fine art and photography options.

Standards and achievement

169. In Year 12 students rapidly improve upon their skills in GCSE and extend their capability in carrying out more intensive visual research and in refining their technical skills. In photography students are introduced to the camera and to the techniques of picture making and processing. Their current work journals demonstrate clear evidence of positive attitudes and good achievement. In fine art students achieve well and successfully extend their drawing and painting skills whilst developing newer skills in modelling and constructing techniques in ceramics. A number of students successfully build upon their study in both fine art and photography to the benefit of their practical work in both disciplines. Year 13 students are building comprehensive folders of visual and art historical research studies and preparatory work of a good standard. The most able students successfully build their own ideas into

the set themes and show a clear sense of personal direction. Some able students' progress in realising their ideas is limited by insufficient breadth of knowledge of modern and contemporary artists and movements. Practical work underway in both art and photography is ambitious and of a good standard.

Teaching and Learning

170. Teaching and learning are consistently good and at times very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use to good effect in ensuring that the students successfully fulfil the demands of the examinations. The teaching styles are appropriately matched to the needs of the students and promote independence and responsibility. Teachers encourage students to make good links across the art disciplines and the deployment of a number of teachers to the sixth form teaching offers students a variety of approaches and outlooks to help them find a personal direction. Lessons are well structured to cover individual learning, group discussion and practical work. Teaching resources are of a good quality and designed to prompt students' thinking and critical development as well as their technical skills. Assessment procedures are good and ensure that students know how to improve. Monitoring progress and setting targets are equally good. The students are well motivated, committed and show an ability to work independently as well as under direction. The volume of work produced is often high and well presented.

Leadership and management

171. Leadership and management are good. Responsibility for the specialist areas of fine art and photography are clearly defined and as a result they are well managed. Sixth form development is securely integrated into the main school departmental plan and results are regularly and appropriately analysed and appropriate action taken. In the recent past the department has successfully introduced ICT into the photography course and this is now a strength which has the potential for wider developments elsewhere in art and design. Resources and accommodation are well managed although cramped. The photography studio, although small, is well equipped and maintained. Display is of high quality and provides a good role model for the students' presentation of their own work. There is a very small area in the main art studio devoted to sixth form students in private study time, which is very well used by them. There is a very good provision for study visits to galleries and museums both nationally and abroad which helps broaden the students' cultural development and informs their studio work. Exhibitions in the school and in arts events offer an audience for the students' work as well as a high profile for the subject in school. Art is increasing in popularity and recruitment onto the sixth form is growing. Many students progress onto higher education art and design courses.
172. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, standards continue to be maintained and teaching and learning continue to be good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection focus was on physical education.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	No judgement
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent
- There are very good student-teacher relationships
- Computers are not used enough to support learning

Commentary

Examination results

173. In 2003 the A2 results were in line with the national average. AS results were well above the national average. In 2004 A2 results improved significantly. In both years students achieved very well and in 2004 A2 achievement was exceptional.

Standards and achievement

174. Students have good knowledge and understanding of physiology and anatomy and a good understanding of many of the theories relating to psychology of sport. A feature of the very good teaching and learning and therefore the achievement of students are the continuous links made between both anatomy and physiology and psychology of sport and the acquisition of skills. This is particularly apparent in the high standard of work in students' personal performance portfolios. Students develop their numeracy skills by analysing data, graphs and tables in several areas of the course. Opportunities for the development of speaking and listening skills are good in lessons as students are continually encouraged to contribute to discussion, although opportunities for developing writing skills are restricted as there are few opportunities for extended writing. Although computers are used effectively in the personal performance portfolios they are underused on the course to support and develop learning.

Teaching and learning

175. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have very good expertise. Lessons are very well planned and there are an excellent range of activities in lessons which involve students in their learning. The structure of lessons is also very good, ensuring that learning builds on existing knowledge and that students of different abilities make appropriate progress. Very helpful reference is made in all lessons to examination criteria.
176. Assessment of work provides sound advice for students to help them improve although this is variable. There are good opportunities for students to complete examination questions during the course.

Leadership and management

177. No judgement has been made on leadership, since the post has only been filled on a temporary basis for the last few weeks. The course is well organised, ensuring all units are covered in appropriate depth. There is a very good range of resources. Development planning requires some improvement.

BUSINESS

178. The school runs four courses for sixth formers. The proportions of students completing the one year TEC First and the two-year BTEC National E-Business are high. Some of these students move onto the A2 and AS level course in economics and business studies which was the focus of the inspection or on to the advanced vocational course that was sampled.
179. **Business studies (AVCE)** was sampled. It caters mainly for students who, at the time of the previous report, would have followed the GNVQ (Advanced) course. Although these courses can not be compared directly, standards have been maintained and are in line with the national average. In the lesson observed, very good teaching resulted in very effective learning as students investigated the role of the World Trade Organisation and collaborated to understand how the imposition of tariffs, quotas and subsidies might affect trade. Teaching and learning draw heavily on practice in business and commerce with many visits and other links. Opportunities for practical work are exploited fully. Students are enthusiastic, they feel that they have made the right choice and value the very good advice and support proffered at the end of Year 11 and throughout the course.

Business studies (AGCE)

Provision in business studies is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- The well qualified and committed teachers form a very effective team
- Students have very positive attitudes and achieve very well in relation to their starting points
- Topical issues and well developed business/industry links enrich the learning and provide a vocational context

Commentary

Examination results

180. In 2003, the A2 results were well above the national average with a particularly high proportion achieving the higher grades of A and B. Unconfirmed figures for 2004 show that standards remain above the national average. AS results for both years show a similar pattern.

Standards and achievement

181. Year 12 students could analyse data drawn from a recent newspaper article as they practised the skills necessary to complete their first piece of coursework. They were able to discuss different methods and so avoid mistakes. Their files show that they have made very good progress since September, including those who had no previous experience of this subject. A number of students were working below the level expected at this stage because access to the course is more open than is usual. However, a similar group of students currently in Year 13 have made very good progress and are working above the level expected. For example, in an excellent lesson where the relationship between contestability, restrictive practices and the public interest was examined they showed a very good understanding of technical language as they made preparations to research a range of markets. Coursework is of a good standard.

Teaching and learning

182. Teaching was very good so students learned most effectively. They used technical language confidently, the teachers proving very good and demanding role models. In oral and written work students are encouraged to give their opinions but only where these are related to theory and their inferences supported with evidence. They are both challenged and supported by the teaching. Pertinent examples drawn from business and commerce reinforce understanding; for example the Year 12 unit 'Investigating Business' is focuses on the local 'Jaguar' factory. The range of activities in the Year 13 lesson provided students with opportunities to work independently and in collaboration with others. They have developed proficiency in a range of statistical methods as a result of very clear explanation that overcomes the considerable differences in numerical competence. All have well developed information technology skills and use these frequently to access both the Internet and the school's student site to research topics.
183. Assessment is thorough, frequent and the results clearly communicated to students. This is valued, as is the detailed advice offered when planning their own work and completing coursework assignments.

Leadership and management

184. The curriculum is very well managed to meet fully the examination board requirements. Detailed schemes of work are set out very clearly. Substantial developments have taken place since the last report; numbers of students have increased, standards raised and, most significantly, parallel academic and vocational courses have been developed successfully. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care was the focus of the inspection.

Provision in health and social care is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships between students and teachers help students to feel supported and secure in a new environment
- Teachers are very knowledgeable and draw on their own experience and expertise to develop students' understanding of care issues
- The course is well structured, with very clear criteria, which enable realistic targets to be set for students
- The department has very good links with local care facilities, which welcome students on work experience

Commentary

Examination results

185. In 2003 AS results were below the national average and A2 results were average. The results in 2004 follow the same trend.

Standards and achievement

186. Students are generally working at an average level, but since many of them enter the course with relatively low GCSE scores, this represents very good achievement. Students in Year 12 are able to analyse and grade pieces of written work according to the course criteria and justify their decisions. This shows a well-developed awareness of how they need to approach their own assignments. In Year 13 students talk confidently about a variety of care settings and are able to discuss theoretical and ethical issues with reference to different pieces of research.

Teaching and learning

187. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of health and social care issues and students recognise and respect this. They use a very good variety of activities, which maintain motivation and concentration and lead to very good learning opportunities for students. Assessment is clear and realistic. Students know what they need to do to improve their work and gain higher grades and because of this, they are very appreciative of the help given to them by their teachers. The clear structure of the course, together with the consistent approach of the teachers to the work, ensure that students' learning is very good.

Leadership and management

188. The very good management ensures that each member of the department complements the others and that work is linked but not duplicated. Very good leadership has brought about a consistent approach, high expectations and a demand for concentration and commitment of the students. It has produced a secure learning environment, which supports students very well, not only at the start of their sixth form career but all the way through. This encourages the students to do their very best to succeed.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

189. General studies and citizenship were sampled. In both areas the quality of teaching is good and leads to students learning well and making good progress.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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