

INSPECTION REPORT

Eckington School

Sheffield, South Yorkshire

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112943

Headteacher: Mr E. Middlemass

Lead inspector: Kathy MacFarlane

Dates of inspection: 11th - 15th October 2004

Inspection number: 268797

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1919
School address:	Dronfield Road Eckington Sheffield South Yorkshire
Postcode:	S21 4GN
Telephone number:	01246 432849
Fax number:	01246 43440
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J. Birkin
Date of previous inspection:	22-Feb-1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Eckington School is a specialist engineering college. It is larger than other schools and educates boys and girls between 11 and 18. The school is popular and is over subscribed. It has grown since the previous inspection and there are currently 1,919 pupils on roll, which includes 242 students in the sixth form. It is situated in an area of Derbyshire to the south-east of Sheffield. The majority of pupils live in the neighbouring villages of Eckington or Killamarsh, although some pupils come from across the city border. The school serves a mixed socio-economic area which does suffer some of the educational deprivation associated with former coalfield areas. Relatively few pupils come from ethnic minorities and even fewer from homes where English is not their first language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average and numbers entitled to free school meals are also low and less than at the time of the previous inspection. The attainment of pupils on entering Year 7 is slightly below average, with literacy skills generally poorer than numeracy. Few pupils join or leave the school during the school year.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3472	Kathy MacFarlane	Lead inspector	
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector	
33009	Gina O'Connor	Team inspector	Mathematics
12568	Chris Morris	Team inspector	English
31159	Clive Simmonds	Team inspector	Science Biology - sixth form
34551	Clive Bulmer	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32672	Stephen Hammond-Evans	Team inspector	Art and design
13805	Lynn Lowery	Team inspector	Design and technology
30978	Elizabeth White	Team inspector	Geography
8070	Joe Haves	Team inspector	History Citizenship
34587	Philip Drabble	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
8744	Brian Whiteley	Team inspector	Music Drama
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education
35552	David Darwood	Team inspector	Religious education
34266	Glenys Hart	Team inspector	Physics - sixth form
20619	Jenny Hazlewood	Team inspector	Business education Economics and Business- sixth form GNVQ Business – sixth form Work-related learning
23436	Jane Davies	Team inspector	Special educational needs
3162	Philip O'Neill	Team inspector	Psychology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

ECKINGTON SCHOOL

Eckington School is a **good** school with many strengths. There is a strong commitment to ongoing improvement in the provision it offers its pupils. This is evident in the changes to the senior leadership team, the strengths in the leadership and management of subjects and the improvement in teaching. Governance is good. Provision in the sixth form is good. The school provides good value for money.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good overall. It is a key factor in raising pupils' aspirations and overall achievement.
- Good leadership and management identify clear priorities for improvement and secure the commitment of staff to raising standards and achievement.
- Good assessment procedures in the main school ensure that pupils' progress is carefully tracked and monitored and that appropriate targets for improvement are identified. Assessment is very good in the sixth form.
- The school does not always ensure that school policies and procedures are monitored and effectively applied across the school.
- The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and the enrichment activities for gifted and talented pupils are very good.
- Standards in information and communication technology are below average. As a result, many pupils are unable to use information and communication technology effectively in different subjects.
- The school uses its accommodation well. However, the size of rooms, particularly for the sixth form and the information centre, is inadequate. As a consequence, there is insufficient space for quiet study and reflection.

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. Standards have risen at the end of Year 9 and have been maintained in GCSE examinations, although there has been some variability between subjects. Teaching is good overall and has improved. The number of lessons where progress is restricted by poor behaviour has been reduced, although this is still an issue in some lessons. Improvements have been made in staffing and resources in information and communication technology, although these have yet to have an effect on standards. In modern foreign languages standards are now satisfactory overall, which represents good progress since the previous inspection. Arrangements for personal, health and social education are now good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall, pupils' achievement is **good**. The attainment of pupils when they begin Year 7 is slightly below the national average. By the end of Year 9, overall standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in 2003 were average when compared to schools nationally. They are, however, above average for similar schools based on attainment at the beginning of Year 7. In 2003, standards were above average in mathematics, average in science and below average in English. At the end of Year 9, standards seen in lessons are in line with national figures and overall achievement is good.

Results in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were comparable to national figures, although when compared to similar schools they were below average. In the majority of subjects, pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. In the sixth form, standards are in line with the national average, although unconfirmed results in 2004 indicate standards above the national average. Achievement in the sixth form is good.

Year 11 and 13 results

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

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

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

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **satisfactory**. The taught programme for personal, social and health education is good. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to demonstrate greater responsibility about the school. Although teaching is good overall, there are often missed opportunities for pupils to raise questions, or have time to reflect on their own thoughts, ideas and concerns. Attitudes, behaviour, attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and results in the good progress that pupils make. Learning is also good. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to encourage pupils and, as a result, the majority show interest and enjoyment in their lessons. In 25 per cent of all lessons teaching was very good or better. However, this good practice has not always been shared to help teachers learn from each other. Although the curriculum offered to the pupils is good, there are too few opportunities in Years 10 and 11 for pupils to study courses more appropriate to their interests and needs. The accommodation for the information centre is too small and restricts independent study. The range and quality of after-school activities is good. The school provides good care, support and guidance to pupils. This is particularly evident in the very successful induction of new pupils. The school has good links with other schools and the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality and effectiveness of both leadership and management are **good**. The quality of governance is **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is good. He has a deep commitment to the school and shows a determination to continue to raise standards and achievement for all pupils. The school has been through a period of significant change, including changes of key staff. This has had an adverse effect on the pace of development in some areas. There is now a new leadership team who demonstrate both the capacity and capability to bring about further improvement. There are effective systems for the day-to-day running of the school. Currently, the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation procedures do not lead to greater consistency of practice across the school. This is particularly true with regard to the school's procedures for behaviour management. A significant strength of leadership and management is the quality of curriculum area leaders. They have clear priorities to improve teaching and learning and raise standards.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The attitudes of pupils, students and parents towards the school are positive. They comment that pupils and students make good progress because teaching is good and they are expected to work hard. Parents find the school approachable and appreciate that pupils settle quickly into school life. Parents and pupils express concern over the behaviour of a number of pupils. Inspection findings show that the majority of pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. However, there are a small number of pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory and this does have an effect on their own learning and, on occasion, on the learning of others.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure monitoring and evaluation have an impact on school procedures and follow up ensures consistency and brings about further improvement;
- improve the behaviour of a small but significant number of pupils;
- improve pupils' skills in information and communication technology;
- improve accommodation, particularly for the sixth form and the information centre;

and, in order to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Provision in the sixth form at Eckington School is **good**. The sixth form provides well for its current students through a range of 27 courses leading to AS level and A-level. However, currently there is only one vocational course offered to students. The school responds positively to the changing needs of its students, particularly in its plans to extend the range of accredited vocational courses. Teaching in the sixth form is good and students learn well as a result. In 2003 the advanced level results for all students were just below the national average. However unconfirmed results for 2004 indicate that results are above average. Overall, students in 2004 achieved well in relation to their GCSE results on entry to Year 12. Each year a number of students choose to follow a GCSE course in English, mathematics or science to improve upon their results in Year 11 or to increase their range of qualifications. Although the school does have an entry policy to the sixth form, it is flexible and gives individuals the opportunity to take appropriate courses. The sixth form is cost effective.

Mains strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is very good with 40 per cent of lessons being very good or excellent.
- Teachers have a good understanding of students' needs, which leads to very good relationships, behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The attitude of sixth form students to their lessons is very good. They respond well to the very good support, advice and guidance from their teachers.
- Assessment procedures and the quality of assessment are very good. Students are very well aware of their targets and find teachers' guidance for improvement beneficial.
- The size of accommodation for sixth form students is inadequate. In many subjects there is insufficient space for teaching large groups or areas for individual study and research.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is good . Students achieve well as a result of good teaching. They exhibit very positive attitudes to the subject. Provision in French is good . Students benefit from good teaching and show very positive attitudes towards their studies.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . The good subject knowledge of teachers and support structures for students ensure that achievement is good.
Science	Provision in biology is very good . Teachers have a masterly knowledge of the subject, being able to clear up any misconceptions the students may have. This leads to the students being able to make very good progress. Provision in physics is satisfactory . Achievement is satisfactory as good teaching successfully promotes good learning.
Information communication technology	Provision in ICT is good . Achievement is good because of good teaching strategies linked to students' learning needs.
Humanities	Provision in geography is good . Teaching and learning are good. Students are conscientious and the quality of their

personal research is good.

Provision in psychology is **very good**. Very good teaching, strengthened by the teachers' depth and breadth of knowledge, lies at the heart of the good achievement of all students.

Visual and performing arts and media

Provision in art and design is **very good**. Standards are well above average. Students benefit from a wide range of very good teaching and have very positive attitudes towards their learning.

Business and Economics

Provision in economics and business is **good**. Standards are average and continuing to improve. Advanced level results are amongst the highest in the school. Students achieve well because of their positive attitudes to work and the good teaching.

Provision for GNVQ Business is **good**. Examination results in the intermediate GNVQ are above average because of the good teaching and positive attitudes of students.

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 receive very **good** support, advice and guidance which they value. The heads of year and tutor team know each student very well. They, together with subject staff, ensure that day-to-day procedures are clear and that students' personal and academic needs are effectively supported. Students are given good advice and guidance about future career pathways.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are **good** and have a clear view of the diverse needs of the students. The school also recognises that it must respond to the changing needs of the students, particularly with regard to the introduction of vocational courses. Currently, the inadequate accommodation does restrict teaching and learning strategies as well as limiting areas for students for private study and research.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive about the sixth form. They say that they feel well supported both academically and personally. They appreciate the opportunity to discuss their individual views and to have them heard.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, achievement is **good**. Standards at the end of Years 9 and Year 11 are **average** when compared to those nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs, is good.
- Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are very high when compared to similar schools.
- Standards in information and communication technology are well below average at the end of both Years 9 and 11.
- By the end of Year 11, standards seen during the inspection in mathematics, geography, music, physical education and business education are above average.

Commentary

1. Overall, attainment in the core and foundation subjects on entry to the school is slightly below the national average. In 2003 the results in the tests at the end of Year 9 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were average when compared with schools nationally. They were above average in mathematics, in line with the national average in science but below the national average in English. The overall trend for all core subjects was above the national trend. This represents good achievement between Years 7 and 9. Results for higher attaining pupils in mathematics and science were good when compared to schools nationally, although English dipped below average in 2003. When compared with schools with similar attainment at the end of Year 6, the school's performance was high overall in the core subjects and had been over the previous two years. The school met its targets in mathematics and science, although not in English. The English department has experienced significant staffing difficulties which resulted in a drop in results in 2003. Unconfirmed results in 2004 showed an improvement in English and mathematics. By the end of Year 9, standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with the national average and the overall achievement was good. Standards seen in design and technology and geography were above the national average whilst standards seen in information and communication technology were below. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.7 (33.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.8 (36.8)	35.4 (34.7)

science	34.5 (34.8)	33.6 (33.3)
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There were 295 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- By the end of Year 11 the school has maintained standards comparable to the national average despite difficulties with staffing and the behaviour and attitudes of a small but significant minority of pupils. GCSE results in 2003 were broadly in line with the average. Unconfirmed results in 2004 were similar. Compared to similar schools, based on pupils' results at the end of Year 9, the percentage of five A*-C grades were below average overall. Overall, girls did better than boys in GCSE in 2003, as was the national picture. Standards in lessons seen during the inspection were above the national average in geography, mathematics, music, physical education and business education. They were below average in history and information and communication technology.
- In 2003 the school did not meet its targets for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades. The school exceeded its target for the percentage of pupils gaining one or more A*-G grades. Targets overall were challenging.

Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	50 (48)	52.0 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (95)	91.0 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	96.0 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.1 (34.7)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 290 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good in all years. Pupils make good progress against the targets identified in their individual education plans. Teachers are responsive to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and drive to continuously improve pupils' achievement. Pupils who receive additional support for reading and spelling make good progress in literacy and gain confidence. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well. The school has only two pupils for whom English is not their first language. Their achievement is satisfactory.
- Standards of literacy are sufficient to support learning in all subjects. Provision for developing competence in these areas is good. The school has held whole-school training on teaching spelling, developing speaking and listening and non-narrative writing. This has had a positive impact in many lessons. Pupils' mathematical skills in other subjects are satisfactory. In ICT, they use formulae well when working with spreadsheets and in science they are able to draw accurate graphs. Standards in information and communication technology are below average. As a result, many pupils are unable to use information and communication technology confidently in their other subjects. There is good use of ICT in mathematics, physical education, science and design and technology. The use of interactive whiteboards is beginning to have an effect upon teaching and learning across the school

Sixth Form

6. Overall, the achievement of students in the sixth form is **good**. Students enter the sixth form with a range of grades at GCSE indicating below average levels of attainment. During the inspection, overall standards were average. They were very good in art and good in mathematics, geography, biology and psychology.
7. Standards in 2003 for Year 13 students based on their average point scores were just below the national average. However, unconfirmed results in 2004 were much higher and likely to be very good compared to national figures. The percentage of students achieving the higher grades A and B in 2003 was significantly lower than the national picture. There is little difference between the results of boys and girls. Whilst there is some variability within subjects, there is no discernable pattern and numbers are sometimes too small to make statistical comparisons.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.4 (98.8)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	29.8 (34.1)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	234.6 (243.7)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 70 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Main School

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are **satisfactory**.

Sixth form pupils have **very good** attitudes and behaviour. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory** throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils like the school and approach learning positively.
- Sixth form pupils are very polite, pleasant and confident.
- A significant minority of pupils, mainly boys, behave badly in lessons and around the school.
- The school's arrangements for pupils' personal development are not consistently applied across the school.

Commentary

8. Pupils generally like school. They join in activities enthusiastically. There is a strong connection between the quality of teaching and the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. Pupils are inclined to work hard where they know that teachers will provide interesting activities and sufficient challenge and will expect and maintain good conduct. This happens in the vast majority of lessons. Pupils become eager and enthusiastic when teachers inspire and stimulate them and so are keen to achieve as well as they can.
9. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and work normally continues without interruption. In a very small minority of lessons the poorly developed social skills and negative attitudes of a few pupils, mainly boys, lead to some unsatisfactory behaviour. This disturbs the learning of the class. Most staff manage this misbehaviour carefully and according to the school's policy.

The school has recently reviewed its discipline policy and practice with the result that the consistency of approach is improving and fewer incidents occur.

10. The conduct of the pupils around the school is not as good as in lessons. The majority of pupils behave well around the school. They move promptly and sensibly to lessons and obey the school rules. A large minority of pupils, mainly boys, pay too little regard for the needs of others. They are rowdy and rude. This disturbs what is otherwise a harmonious community because the majority of pupils are eager to get on well with others. Pupils state that the occasional incidence of bullying is managed well and they feel safe in the school.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1825	103	4
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	8	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	5	0	0

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

11. The majority of pupils become increasingly confident and sensible as they move up through the school. Pupils are able to take responsibility when the opportunity is provided. Opportunities for these are good in lessons and satisfactory in school life generally. They also respond well when there are clear expectations for them to develop caring attitudes towards others.
12. A substantial minority of Years 9, 10 and 11 pupils are immature. Inconsistency in the staff's approach to pupils confuses them and so pupils feel under-valued. They have difficulty identifying their own responsibility in the school and society generally. Aspects of the accommodation inhibit pupils' personal development. In particular, the lunch environment does not provide a positive experience for pupils.
13. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils have too few opportunities to reflect seriously on the fundamental questions of life. Pupils demonstrate a genuine willingness to explore and communicate their feelings when encouraged to do so. Year 8 pupils said they felt calm and thoughtful after a very good assembly about time. They do not feel as positive about all their assemblies because the quality varies too much and seldom fosters genuine reflection.
14. Pupils appreciate different cultures and faiths throughout the world and that different people conduct their lives in different ways. Religious education lessons make the most significant impact on this understanding. Year 9 pupils were very respectful towards the nature of Islamic prayer in a lesson where they designed their own imperfect prayer mats.
15. Pupils attend regularly because the school has good arrangements for promoting and monitoring their attendance. Very few pupils arrive late to school. Movement between lessons has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils now move purposefully to lessons and so work begins on time.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.9	School data:	0.7
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

Sixth Form

16. Sixth form students are determined to succeed in their lessons and wider activities and so work very hard. They are ambitious for themselves and others and support each other very well in their work and leisure activities. Students value the additional opportunities that the school provides and participate enthusiastically. They eagerly support younger students and therefore make good contributions to school life. Students provide very good role models for the younger students because they are confident and mature. Staff treat students as young adults and they respond accordingly. High levels of mutual respect exist between students and with adults. The sixth form community at Eckington is dignified, purposeful and happy.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Main School

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is **good**. Assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, the good relationships between pupils and teachers ensure that classrooms have a positive learning atmosphere.
- Effective use of the principles of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy ensure that lessons are well planned for learning.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables the development of good discussions which deepen pupils knowledge and understanding.
- In a minority of lessons the management of the pupils is unsatisfactory and this hinders learning.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

17. The school has placed considerable emphasis on the development of good teaching strategies and, as a result, there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. During the inspection, 96 per cent of lessons seen were satisfactory or better and 25 per cent were very good or excellent.
18. Although there is still some unsatisfactory teaching, the incidence of unsatisfactory lessons is considerably reduced since the previous inspection. Teaching is very good in business education and good in all other subjects with the exception of ICT and modern foreign languages where teaching is satisfactory. Currently, however, the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures do not lead to effective dissemination of best practice across the school.
19. Lessons are effectively planned. Most begin with a starter task which quickly engages pupils' attention and interest, giving lessons a brisk purposeful beginning. Lessons contain a good range of activities, including group work that often results in a very high level of discussion and a perceptive understanding of issues and concepts as in a Year 11 lesson when pupils considered aggression in sport.
20. Skilful questioning which checks understanding and provides opportunities for pupils' enquiries is a feature of many lessons. Pupils seek further information confidently as in religious education when analysing the practical difficulties of praying five times a day. In many lessons pupils and teacher evaluate well what has been learned. However, this practice is inconsistently applied.
21. Good teaching is possible because of the generally good relationships between teachers and pupils and good classroom management strategies. For example, where necessary, teachers use the school's warning system very effectively. Pupils move smoothly and at a good pace from one activity to another. In a minority of lessons these relationships are poorly established and classroom management is unsatisfactory. In these circumstances, noise becomes a barrier to learning, instructions are unclear or heard incorrectly and pupils become confused and poorly motivated.
22. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Where subject teachers are supported by learning support assistants, the teaching is often very good. Liaison between support staff and subject teachers is good overall and effective use of support in lessons has a significant impact on pupils' learning. Since the previous inspection, the quality of individual in-class support has been much improved by the appointment of a specialist team of classroom assistants. Pupils with learning and language difficulties attend withdrawal sessions in which they receive highly relevant, intensive teaching from the learning support teachers. These lessons are characterised by attention to individual targets and good planning. The teamwork demonstrated by learning support teachers and learning support assistants is effective in ensuring that individual pupils are well supported in many subjects. Although the majority of teachers take account of the needs of individual pupils, the extent to which teachers adapt their teaching to accommodate pupils with special educational needs is variable across the curriculum. Teaching to match the needs of special educational needs

pupils in subjects of the curriculum is generally good. It is frequently very good in mathematics and physical education but in other subjects opportunities are sometimes missed.

23. In lessons, teachers usually take account of the needs of gifted and talented pupils with suitably challenging activities and tasks. This is, however, not totally consistent and opportunities to challenge pupils are missed.
24. The teaching of literacy is good in the majority of subjects and never less than satisfactory. Key words are displayed in classrooms and in the best practice they are referred to constantly. Although there are good examples of marking addressing literacy issues these are not consistently seen. For example, in ICT pupils are not encouraged to make use of grammar and spelling checks. There is effective and imaginative use of wider reading in several areas. Pupils in history read 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' as a supplementary text on the First World War and in science pupils learning about viruses read a science fiction story by Isaac Asimov to enhance their learning. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory overall. The use of electronic whiteboards across the school is having a positive effect on teaching and learning. In addition, the innovative ICT contract ensures that key aspects of ICT are taught within an appropriate context.

Assessment

25. Learning is well supported by assessment. All subject departments are developing individual targets for pupils and tracking their progress well from year to year and across the key stages. In mathematics, running spreadsheets from Year 7 to Year 11 show how pupils do on entry to the school. Targets are set and their individual progress monitored. In drama there is very good feedback to pupils using well-structured systems which identify early underachievement. The assessment of how pupils progress in physical education is vigorous and regular careful checks, particularly with pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are following the GCSE course, rapidly identify underachievement. Underachieving pupils are then supported with effective catch-up sessions. Marking is generally good across the school with appropriate comments on how to improve, but there are some inconsistencies when some comments not being matched to National Curriculum levels. In ICT, assessment does not yet ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities for self-evaluation. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are well organised and accurate. This ensures that work is closely matched to pupils' levels of attainment.

Sixth Form

The quality of teaching in the sixth form is **good**. Assessment is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and of the demands of the examinations.
- Students are confident in sharing their views and understanding because relationships in the classrooms are very supportive.
- Assessment procedures are very good and ensure that students know how to improve.

Commentary

26. In the subjects inspected in detail, the quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In discussions with sixth form students, they recognise that teaching is good and appreciate the quality of support they receive. Teaching was always at least satisfactory and almost four out of every ten lessons were very good or excellent.
27. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to teach well and to devise activities that challenge all students. Students are encouraged to direct their own learning as they complete research for case studies or to give presentations to fellow students.

28. The learning atmosphere in all lessons is very good. No time is lost and tasks are often timed with tight deadlines. Students respond well to teachers' high expectations of them and generally work hard. They are supportive of each other, particularly when involved in group activities, and feel very secure when asking questions and clarifying their ideas.

Assessment

29. The assessment procedures and the quality of assessment are very good. Assessment of students' work is usually accurate and very well informed by detailed knowledge of examination criteria. As well as recognising achievement, assessment in most subjects gives effective guidance on how to improve. In ICT, however, such guidance is limited. From the start of Year 12, all subject teachers and form tutors are provided with target grades for students based on their prior attainment. Progress towards these targets is regularly reviewed. Where there are concerns, meetings between students and the relevant staff consider different strategies for support. In mathematics and biology, where assessment data suggests that students starting courses may encounter difficulties, bridging units of work are provided. Students are well aware of their targets and find the guidance on improvement beneficial.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 203 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (2%)	45 (22%)	97 (48%)	47 (23%)	8 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The curriculum, overall, is **good**. It is **good** in Years 7 to 9 and **satisfactory** in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum in the sixth form is **good**. The quality and quantity of accommodation is **satisfactory** and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The core curriculum in English, mathematics and science is of good quality through Years 7 to 11.
- The subject curriculum, in most areas of learning, is good throughout the school.
- There are good arrangements in place to monitor and review the whole curriculum.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not provide sufficient opportunities, particularly vocational courses, to cater for the wide range of needs and aptitudes of all pupils.
- Provision for pupils identified as able, gifted and talented is good.
- The curricular provision for personal, health and social education and citizenship is good in Years 7 to 11.
- Specialist school status in engineering is not yet having sufficient impact upon the whole curriculum.

Commentary

30. The school provides a good, well-balanced curriculum in Years 7 to 9, which is fully inclusive. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements.
31. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils have good opportunities to progress because departments structure their teaching programme carefully to cater for all abilities. In English the new scheme of work provides clear learning objectives. In mathematics, careful planning provides good learning opportunities in lessons for differing abilities. A strength of the science curriculum is a project designed to promote higher order thinking skills. Other subjects offer a wide range of benefits.

In design technology, all strands of work are fully accessible. In music and drama, skills based courses related to attainment targets ensure pupils' work is closely matched to their ability.

32. In Years 10 and 11 there are strengths in provision in all core subjects such as science, where a new GCSE course, science in the 21st century, is being piloted. In both history and geography, good use is made of educational visits to support GCSE coursework. There is good provision in business education for pupils of all abilities. In art, a good feature is the opportunity to study photography. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for pupils to access courses outside the range of National Curriculum and GCSE courses.
33. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Pupils with learning and language difficulties enjoy relevant small group and one-to-one work with members of the learning support team, which contribute well to the development of their skills and self-confidence. This provision is well organised to ensure the minimum disruption to mainstream teaching. In Years 10 and 11 the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) scheme is popular with pupils with special educational needs. The pupils who opt for this course also benefit from support with their GCSE coursework, which is significant in ensuring that they achieve well. The provision of support at lunchtimes is a good feature of the learning support area in that it provides a safe and supportive environment for pupils who can be at risk in a large school. This provision is made possible by the commitment of the support staff.
34. Year teams and departments ensure that activities are provided for the enrichment and enhancement of able, gifted and talented pupils. This includes master classes in some subjects. The response of pupils to such opportunities is enthusiastic and pupils appreciate the support they receive from the school. The school makes clear its commitment in this area by, for example, assisting pupils in joining the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth at Warwick University.
35. The provision for the pupils for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory overall. One pupil receives specialist support from an English as an additional language teacher while the other is provided with intensive tuition by a teacher of modern foreign languages. Both pupils are well integrated into the life of the school.
36. The curriculum for personal, health and social education and citizenship provides good opportunities for all pupils to develop their personal and social skills, life skills and citizenship. It is effectively promoted in Years 7 to 9 in the humanities curriculum, with further inputs from such areas as science. A particular strength in Years 10 and 11 is the opportunity for all pupils to pursue the GCSE short course in citizenship.
37. Governors, staff, parents and pupils all contribute effectively to arrangements for monitoring and review across all year groups. These well established procedures ensure the school receives good feedback upon curriculum development. The school has had specialist status as an Engineering College for two years. This has not yet had sufficient impact upon the experience of all pupils across the curriculum, in terms of the range of vocational courses currently being studied or the dissemination of best practice in teaching and learning.
38. Most subject departments regularly provide lunchtime and after school activities which are intended to develop pupils' interests and achievements further. These are particularly good in mathematics, drama, science, design technology and physical education.
39. A large proportion of the building is purpose built and matches the demands of the subject specialisms very well. The school has provided a number of extra rooms including laboratories and facilities for drama and music since the previous inspection.. However, major problems exist within the sixth form building where the general classrooms are too small for the group sizes that use them. This, coupled with high numbers in the sixth form, is creating severe problems and restricting the variety of teaching methods that can be used. Inside practical physical education space is insufficient but will be overcome now that the new sports hall bid has been successful. The information centre is small and does not provide enough space for a

school of this size. However, the use made of this facility is good, with staff giving good advice and guidance to pupils. Currently, wheelchair and disabled access to the information centre is impossible and this is unsatisfactory. Bus departure, together with parents picking up their children from the school site, presents potential danger at the end of the school day. This is handled well by school staff. Pupils have insufficient access to suitable quiet, social areas both inside and outside at break and lunchtimes.

40. Resources for teaching and learning meet the needs of the curriculum well. Recent investment in ICT facilities from funds generated by the school and as part of the school's engineering status has improved the provision since the previous inspection considerably. Provision is very good in design and technology and mathematics with many inter-active whiteboards and computers. Further ICT equipment in the form of computers and inter-active whiteboards across the school is seen as a priority in the schools planning.

Sixth Form

Overall, the curriculum provision in the sixth form is **good**. Accommodation in the sixth form block is **unsatisfactory**. Resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The open entry policy provides good opportunities for all students to achieve.
 - A large range of advanced level courses is on offer to the students.
 - At present there is only one vocational course offered to students.
 - There is a very good curriculum for psychology, delivered in a creative and innovative way.
 - The accommodation in the sixth form block restricts the teaching strategies used.
41. In the sixth form the good provision of advanced level courses is popular with students. English, mathematics and science courses all have a good quality curriculum. In psychology provision is very good with a wide range of learning activities. Students' personal development remains an important aspect of provision. There is sufficient time to cover all courses in depth. At present, there is only one vocational course taught on the school site. However, the school provides students with information and supports their access to vocational courses at nearby further education colleges. This sensible arrangement ensures good provision at a local level is available to all. Currently, the teaching rooms for the sixth form are too small. Resources for the courses on offer are good.

Care, guidance and support

The school has **good** arrangements for the health, safety and welfare of pupils. It provides **good** support and guidance for main school pupils and **very good** help for sixth form pupils. It has **satisfactory** arrangements for involving pupils in its work and development and **good** arrangements in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good induction procedures help new pupils settle quickly.
- The school takes good care of pupils with particular needs.
- Systems to involve pupils are not fully effective.

Commentary

42. Pupils manage the transfer to Eckington School easily because they are already familiar with the school and the staff. Year 7 pupils make return visits to their primaries to address Year 6 pupils. Eckington pupils spoke confidently about their introduction to secondary education and value the continuing interest taken in their well being by Year 8 mentors. The Year 7 pupils have particular confidence in their tutors and head of year and recognise that their needs matter.

43. The vast majority of pupils value their relationships with the staff, particularly their tutors. Pupils comment that tutors track their personal development carefully and are alert to any change in their demeanour. Staff take prompt action to arrest any further deterioration and to help the pupil get back on track. Pupils with particular needs know that specialist staff provide sensitive and well-considered help. Equally good care is taken of children who are looked after or who have special education needs. The recent introduction of several non-teaching assistant heads of year is a good innovation. This secures immediate help for any pupil needing urgent, individual attention. The school makes good use of the available accommodation, such as the well developed and promoted Connexions area and has provided additional rooms for counselling and supporting behaviour improvement. There are comprehensive arrangements for child protection. Staff promote effectively a safe and healthy environment. Daily routines are carried out thoroughly. Proficient and very willing support staff ensure that information about pupils' needs flows very efficiently.
44. Teachers routinely track pupils' academic progress. They assess pupils' work regularly and share the outcomes with them. A few departments such as mathematics, geography, physical education, drama and music give pupils very clear and helpful guidance on exactly how to improve. These departments involve pupils fully in evaluating their own work and setting their own targets. Tutors have access to a good range of data about pupils' academic performance. Pupils do not all recognise the tutors' role in monitoring and promoting academic progress because arrangements vary between years and tutor groups. The school provides good careers guidance for each individual pupil so that they approach the next stage of their education or training confidently.
45. The school is keen to seek pupils' involvement in its future development. The school council has recently been invigorated this year due to the efforts of the current sixth form and has made a promising start. The school promotes peer mentoring very successfully in order to engage individual pupils in their learning and as a means of support. Pupils are keen to participate in decisions about the school's development. A substantial minority are not confident in the school's mechanisms for seeking and acting upon their views and opinions. This is because arrangements are not sufficiently regular and systematic to engage all pupils.
46. There are effective arrangements to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are successfully integrated into the life of the school. There is good liaison with feeder primary schools together with good quality assessment arrangements for pupils with special needs. Pupils' learning and behaviour targets are precise and regularly reviewed. They are involved in the process so that they know what to do to improve. The learning support department provides teachers with guidance on appropriate teaching strategies and, where these are applied, they have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Effective use is made of outside agencies and support services and this further ensures that pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate guidance and support.

Sixth Form

The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff support sixth form students very well in their studies.
 - Teachers and tutors know their students' needs well.
 - Students value the support and guidance they receive.
47. Students value the very good support that teachers provide. Teachers promote very good working relationships with their students. They routinely monitor and guide students' work very carefully. Students comment that the staff know them very well. The heads of year and the tutor team have been with these students since Year 7. They therefore have a good understanding of each student's history. Tutors and year heads provide individual students with the care and attention needed to make informed choices about their future careers.

Students respond sensibly to regular consultation and staff respect and try to act on what they say.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school reaches out successfully to parents to include them in their child's education.
- The school harnesses the interests and skills of local people and organisations to the benefit of pupils, students and staff.
- Secure links with local primary schools ensure the smooth transfer of pupils.
- Systematic links with other institutions extend pupils' choices and aspirations.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of the annual report of individual pupils.

Commentary

48. Staff work hard and effectively to include parents in their child's education. Staff know pupils' families well and involve parents quickly when any intervention is necessary. A home school liaison group ensures that parents' views are included in future school development planning. Parents report that any parental concerns are handled very promptly using correct procedures. Staff are particularly careful about communication with parents of children who have any special educational or additional need. The school arranges very effective support from a wide range of agencies and ensures that parents are partners in this collaboration. Parents are, therefore, confident that the school meets their child's individual needs and value the support given.
49. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory. Teachers provide good detail about pupils' accomplishments, particularly in terms of the efforts made by the pupils and their attitude to lessons. Less helpful advice is provided about how pupils can improve their work. The reports, however, make little reference to the pupils' actual achievements related to the detail of the courses. Good curriculum booklets for each year ensure that parents understand what the courses will cover.
50. The school is energetic in its search for community partners. Pupils and students benefit from a good range of activities because these partnerships are managed systematically. Staff use the skills and resources offered to the daily life of the school. Many partners, for instance, support the careers' education programme, the personal, health and social education programme and activities such as Young Enterprise.
51. The learning support department maintains close links with parents, who are regularly informed of pupils' progress. The co-ordinator of learning support makes frequent contact with parents. The school works closely with its feeder primary schools in order to ensure that appropriate provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Productive partnerships have been developed between the school and local colleges and agencies to provide relevant courses and training opportunities for these pupils.
52. The school is committed to working in partnership with other schools. Engineering college status, and the additional funds this attracts, enables teachers, particularly some of the school's advanced skills teachers, to share their expertise with several primary schools. The school surveys new Year 7 parents and uses the results to work closely with the primaries to ensure that pupils' transition is smooth. A shared approach to homework in Years 6 and 7 is being negotiated as a result of parental concerns about the quantity of homework. Parents and pupils praise the successful summer schools that Eckington staff organise for Year 6 pupils. Close links with a local special school enrich the education of the special school pupils.
53. The school also works well with colleges and universities. Pupils attending college courses are very positive about the courses and the opportunities they get to meet pupils from other

schools. Warwick University offers master classes for gifted and talented pupils. The school has close links with the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology for the teaching of further mathematics. These successful links encourage pupils to aim for higher education beyond the immediate vicinity.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the quality of leadership and management are **good**. The governance of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is good. He has a strong commitment to the school and has given it a clear sense of direction.
- Despite improvements in management structures, monitoring and evaluation of school policies and practice in some areas is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management of curriculum areas are good.
- The arrangements for the continuing professional development of staff are good.
- The school has good financial planning procedures that support school priorities very well.

Commentary

54. The leadership of the headteacher is good. He is a strong driving force in moving the school forward. He is well supported by his senior and middle managers. There is a strong commitment to raising standards as well as the achievement of pupils. The school works successfully to ensure that there is equality of opportunity. To this end there are clear priorities for improvement and the school improvement plan gives detailed information on how and when the priorities are to be addressed. The headteacher has worked hard to improve the leadership and management skills of staff across the school. This has included use of formal reviews, creative use of non-teaching staff to support pastoral year heads and external training providers to enhance the skills of middle managers further. The headteacher and governors see them as crucial in the overall drive to raise standards further. They are involved more effectively in the school's self evaluation and improvement planning process than at the time of the previous inspection. This, in part, is the reason for the good leadership of the curriculum area leaders. Leadership is good in all areas. It is very good in mathematics, design and technology, physical education and business education.
55. The school has used its acquisition of engineering college status to effectively support other schools and the community. It has met its targets with regard to being a specialist school but the impact across the school, particularly in sharing and embedding best practice, is less effective.
56. The governance of the school is good. They are loyal to and positive about the school and have developed their role as good critical friends to the school. They receive and analyse performance data and progress reports presented by the headteacher and curriculum area leaders. They are prepared to challenge and raise concerns as well as give credit for a job well done. The governors are effective in their financial oversight of the school. They have a very good understanding of the principles and practice of best value and use them fully to underpin their work. They are now well supported and guided by an effective and efficient director of administration and finance. Budget decisions are made prudently after careful consideration. The full impact of these decisions, however, is not always systematically evaluated. Governors have also worked hard to improve their effectiveness and work well through a series of scrutiny groups, which include members of staff. They also have their own action plan to support the school in its work. The school does not, however, comply with its statutory duties to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils. This was an issue at the time of the previous inspection.

57. Overall, management of the school is good. It functions effectively on a day-to-day basis as a calm and orderly community. The school has recently devised a detailed self-evaluation programme which includes focused reviews of subjects on a rolling cycle. As yet this is in its early days of development. Currently, the monitoring does not lead to consistent application of school procedures, for example, over behaviour management and the pastoral guidance to pupils on their attainment. This leads to some pupils behaving inappropriately about the school and some feeling detached from school life and not feeling valued stakeholders. Overall, management by curriculum area leaders is good. They are very supportive of their subject colleagues. Schemes of work and planning are also good. However, the evaluation of lessons and monitoring of pupils' work are less effective in identifying, sharing and embedding good practice. As a consequence, there are inconsistencies in the school's approach to aspects of teaching and learning and much of the very good practice in the school is not fully developed across and between subject areas. The school collects and analyses a range of useful data and uses it to monitor and track progress effectively.
58. The learning support department is well managed by the head of inclusion. She has been effective in co-ordinating the work of the team and has good, clear plans for its development. In this, she is well supported by the deputy co-ordinator of learning support who liaises effectively with health and education professionals. The learning support assistants have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and their deployment is very effective. Liaison between the learning support department and subject and year leaders is successful in ensuring that all pupils with special educational needs receive the support they require. Staff development and training includes relevant aspects of special educational needs.
59. There are sufficient specialist staff to deliver the curriculum. The arrangements for continuing professional development of staff and performance management are good. Teachers are supported by appropriate training opportunities. The school is currently preparing to extend this to non-teaching staff. The induction programme for new teachers is satisfactory. Newly qualified staff are well supported and buddies are attached to all new staff and appreciated by them. Currently, the programmes for staff new to the school and newly qualified teachers are organised separately.
60. In the last few years the school has undergone significant change. There has been a large turnover of key staff both at senior and middle management level. This has had an adverse effect on the pace of change in some areas. However, the school has maintained standards, secured engineering school status, continued to ensure that pupil achievement and the quality of education are good and made good progress from the previous inspection. It gives good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,567,871	Balance from previous year	509,693
Total expenditure	5,571,226	Balance carried forward to the next year	720,658
Expenditure per pupil	2,987		

The large amount of money carried forward to 2004 is to pay for the new music building and for ICT expenditure.

Sixth Form

61. The sixth form is well led and managed. Despite the accommodation in the sixth form block being inadequate, the school's overall provision is good. The school has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and recognises that it needs to be responsive to changing needs. To this end the school has already begun to make changes to the guidance systems in order to create a more specialist sixth form team. This in no way distracts from the very good pastoral support and monitoring arrangements currently in place to support students. Their progress is carefully checked and difficulties are quickly identified. They have regular review sessions and clear targets for improvement.
62. Students have their own forum which provides feedback both on general and specific subjects. This supports the school's evaluation of provision. Students commented that they felt listened to and heard. For example, they identified the need for more private study areas and greater access to computers. Despite accommodation difficulties the school found additional space and purchased a number of laptop computers. There are plans for a new sixth form block to accommodate the increased number wanting to enter the sixth form. The sixth form is cost effective.

Work-related learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work-related learning is well managed.
- Pupils are positive about their opportunities to learn about work.
- There are good links with the local college and the companies who provide work-based placements.
- There is an increasing range of well-organised industry days.

Commentary

63. Work-related learning is managed well by an experienced co-ordinator and the business partnership manager. They have good links with the Connexions service, the education business partnership and a range of local companies who are involved in bringing a work related dimension to the curriculum. For example, pupils benefit from the contribution of the national health service as well as forensic and energy scientists for their science coursework. All year groups are involved in annual engineering challenge days to help them acquire problem solving and team building skills.
64. In their Year 10 careers lessons pupils participate enthusiastically in a well planned simulation to introduce them to the problems of financial planning and decision making on a limited budget. The careers programme starts in Years 7 and 8 where pupils make an early start to raise an awareness of their interests and aptitudes. All Year 9 pupils have the opportunity to visit Sheffield University as part of the Aim Higher initiative to raise achievement and career aspirations. The annual industry day provides Year 10 pupils with an opportunity to work with different industry visitors on a range of work related activities. Pupils are well prepared for their two-week work experience programme and their learning is consolidated and recorded in their progress file and work experience booklet.
65. At the end of Year 9 there are a limited number of college placements leading to entry level or national vocational qualifications and pupils are selected through interview and aptitude. The very good liaison between the college and school ensures the health and well-being of pupils. Pupils are motivated by work-related courses selected from motor vehicle studies, hairdressing, childcare and GCSE in engineering.
66. Only a very small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to participate in work-based learning. For two days each week they work within a real company and this helps them understand at first hand what skills are required to be successful at work. Companies, in

collaboration with the school, provide good, relevant training in the world of work for these pupils.

67. The school is committed to work-related learning and in extending the range of creative partnerships with companies. Extending, monitoring and evaluating work-related provision are a key part of the work-related learning action plan. Governors and staff are aware of recent legislation relating to the development of work-related learning. There has not been a recent audit of practice across the school and many staff are not aware of the way in which individual subjects can contribute.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There was a marked rise in results in the unconfirmed Year 9 tests in 2004 following a weaker performance in 2003.
- Performance at the higher grades in GCSE English language rose in 2004 and is now above average.
- Well-structured lessons underpin good teaching throughout the department.
- After a period of staffing difficulties, good leadership and management have created a highly motivated team of teachers.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have enough opportunities for extended writing.
- In some mixed ability classes there is not enough challenge for the highest attaining pupils.

Commentary

68. Results in 2003 in Year 9 tests were below the national average. Unconfirmed results for 2004 show a marked improvement and reflect the work seen during the inspection, which is at the national average. GCSE results in English language and literature in 2003 were at the national average for A* to C grades, although at the very highest levels in English language they were below average. The unconfirmed 2004 results showed performance at the highest GCSE grades was above average. Standards of work seen during the inspection in both English

language and literature are at the national average. There is no substantial difference in the attainment of boys or girls beyond that seen nationally.

69. Achievement of pupils is good. At the start of Year 7 standards are slightly below average but this has been improved upon by Year 9. The current Year 11 cohort entered the school clearly below average and were below in their Year 9 tests. Steady improvement in their standards has brought them up to the national average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.
70. In speaking and listening by Year 9 all pupils contribute confidently in discussions. By Year 11 the highest attaining pupils structure their contributions to discussions for good effect and change tone and emphasis as appropriate. In reading, by Year 9 most pupils cope with required tests and the most successful pupils tease out and identify underlying meanings and themes. In writing, by Year 9 pupils write in a variety of forms and by Year 11 have become adept at varying sentence structure and using overall organisation to communicate meaning. Weaker pupils experience difficulties with grammar and spelling.
71. The good achievement of pupils is the result of good teaching and learning. No teaching is less than satisfactory. The majority of lessons are good with a substantial minority that are very good. Lessons are well structured and reflect the influence of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Teachers use questioning well, both to involve a wide range of pupils and to evaluate understanding. Teachers exhibit very good subject knowledge and in Years 10 and 11 this leads to good and detailed extended discussions in literature lessons. The supportive attitude of teachers and the positive atmosphere encourages confidence and the willingness to participate. Accordingly in a Year 7 class reading 'Boy' by Roald Dahl, all the pupils wanted to offer opinions and read aloud.
72. Teachers take good account of the needs of pupils who experience difficulty in the subject. Time is carefully allocated to ensuring all pupils are able to understand the work. On occasions in Years 7 to 9, there is insufficient challenge to meet the needs of the highest attaining pupils. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the good teaching they receive. They are well motivated and enjoy the subject and this is an important factor in the good quality of learning in the subject. Marking is detailed and positive in tone. Guidance on how to improve is good overall but is too variable.
73. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 offers comprehensive coverage of the Key Stage 3 Framework objectives. It ensures consistency across the department. There are, however, not enough opportunities for extended writing in which pupils can practise and gain experience in using the skills they have been taught. The English department contributes well to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils. The study of many texts gives opportunities for discussing ethical and social issues and these are well integrated into lessons. There is less evidence of spiritual development. The department does not make extensive use of ICT, although they recognise the need to increase its use and have good ideas for doing so.
74. Leadership and management of the department are good. The curriculum area leader has only been in post since earlier this year but there is already very good morale in the department, who work as a genuine team. After a time when there were numerous staffing difficulties, this is an important factor in the evident sense of purpose now displayed. Schemes of work have been re-written and there is a clear focus on areas to be addressed in order to raise attainment further. Nearly all the issues raised in the previous report have been rectified.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

75. Standards of literacy are sufficient to support learning in all subjects. Provision for developing competence in these areas is good. The school has held whole-school training on teaching spelling, developing speaking and listening and non-narrative writing. This has had a positive impact in many lessons. There is both a whole school literacy policy and specific subject

policies. The teaching of literacy is good in the majority of subjects and never less than satisfactory.

Modern Foreign Languages

Overall, provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-structured lesson plans are a strength of teaching.
- Teachers make good use of a range of strategies to promote learning and to maintain the interest of pupils in lessons.
- The quality of teaching resources produced by the department is very good.
- There is insufficient use of the foreign language as the normal means of communication by teachers and pupils.
- In some classes there is insufficient challenge, particularly with regards to extended speaking.

76. By the end of Year 9 standards attained by pupils are the same as the national average. At GCSE, in both French and German, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C has increased significantly with the result that attainment at GCSE is now broadly in line with national figures. There has been an increased focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the languages department. This has had a positive effect on examination results. In both French and German the percentage of pupils obtaining GCSE grades A* to B is lower than the percentage nationally.
77. In Years 7, 8 and 9 standards seen during the inspection were broadly average and the achievement of most pupils was satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils show the ability to pick out the main points from spoken passages delivered at normal speed and are able to write at varying lengths about such topics as their families and free time. By Year 9 high attaining pupils are showing the ability to communicate in the past tense. In Years 10 and 11 overall standards seen during the inspection were satisfactory. Achievement was also satisfactory. These pupils are beginning to write in a more extended manner on such topics as school and future ambitions. Pupils show positive attitudes towards language learning.
78. Teaching and learning in modern languages are satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers' planning is good and they make use of a wide range of activities which offer pupils an appropriate degree of challenge. In a Year 11 German lesson, for example, pupils made good progress because the tasks that they undertook became progressively more difficult. Teachers make very effective use of games and pair work, which allow pupils to practise language intensively and to learn from each other. All lessons begin with a starter activity which allows pupils to revise what they have been taught in a previous lesson or lessons and to demonstrate what they know. In Years 10 and 11, teachers provide pupils with good models and templates to improve the quality of their written work. Teachers have a clear view of what skills, knowledge and understanding they wish their pupils to acquire. They express these expectations to their classes at the beginning of lessons, giving pupils a sense of purpose to their work. Displays of pupils' work exemplifying particular levels of attainment, the use of a mark scheme based on National Curriculum levels and teacher comments in lessons and in exercise books all serve to help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their performance in French or German.
79. Where lessons are less successful, teacher expectations are insufficiently high with the result that pupils make limited progress, both within lessons and over time. Sometimes teachers are too willing to accept single word and single sentence responses when the pupils, given the opportunity, are capable of speaking in a more extended manner across a range of topic areas. The teachers' own use of French and German as the normal means of communication is often rather limited with the result that pupils are deprived of the opportunity to improve their

listening skills. The link between the way words are said and written is not being taught in a systematic way which means that many pupils experience difficulty in reading aloud from the written word, particularly in French. In Year 9 there is some unnecessary re-teaching of language previously taught in Years 7 and 8.

80. Leadership and management of the modern foreign languages department are good as good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The department has embraced some new approaches regarding the teaching of modern foreign languages and these are having a positive impact on both learning and pupil engagement. The advanced skills teacher has been instrumental in extending the teaching of languages into the primary schools. Provision for the use of ICT has been improved but use of the CD ROMs that the department has purchased has been hampered by limited access to computers. The languages department provides pupils with the opportunity to visit Germany and France. However, the department has not yet dovetailed the language learning which now occurs in the primary schools with that which occurs in Year 7.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, particularly in Years 7 to 9, which results in good achievement.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- A wide variety of teaching styles, including use of ICT, are used in order to motivate and engage all pupils in the learning.
- Assessment data is used very effectively to set targets and track progress.
- There are missed opportunities to emphasise and encourage literacy skills.
- Although informal pupil self-assessment is used regularly to check understanding and inform planning, there is some inconsistency in the use of constructive comments when marking.

Commentary

81. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average attainment. By the end of Year 9 in 2003, pupils' results in the national tests were above average compared to national standards, well above average compared to similar schools and showed excellent progress compared to prior attainment. Pupils' achievement is very good. The standards of work seen during the inspection were at least in line with the national average and mostly above. Unconfirmed results for 2004 show pupils' attainment is above the national average.
82. At the end of Year 11 in 2003 GCSE results at grades A*-C were above average compared to national standards and above average compared to similar schools. In work seen during the inspection standards are at least in line and most are above the national average. Pupils' achievement is good. Unconfirmed results for 2004 have improved and are above the national average.
83. All pupils follow a curriculum to match their needs and, as a consequence, achievement is good. For example, in a Year 7 group pupils were able to predict numbers in sequences and high ability pupils in Year 9 were able to use algebra to find the n th term. All pupils are working at the national average or above. Pupils with special needs also achieve well and good practical resources are available to support their learning. All pupils are entered for GCSE and there is a numeracy certificate for pupils with special needs. Both the proportions of pupils entered for GCSE and those gaining A* to G grades are above the national average. A modular course in Year 10 and 11 ensures that pupils are aware of their progress towards target grades throughout the course.

84. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to explain the mathematics to ensure all pupils understand. They use good questioning to find out pupils' prior knowledge and build upon it. Teachers share the learning objectives with pupils and explain the purpose of the work. A wide variety of teaching styles are used and tasks are set to match pupils' needs to ensure all pupils are involved in the lesson. The use of the interactive whiteboard is a particular strength, involving pupils in their learning. Pupils' speaking skills have improved since the previous inspection and they are able to contribute to discussions well. However, although teachers mention keywords, they are not consistent and they are not emphasised. Opportunities for developing literacy skills are missed. For example, the use of writing frames to support and encourage written explanations and reasoning. Teachers assess pupils' work well, sharing the information with them and using it to set targets and track progress. They mark work regularly but the use of constructive comments to enable pupils to understand how they can improve is not consistent. Teachers use informal pupil self-assessment well in the classroom to find out who is in need of more support and who needs to move on.
85. Both leadership and management of the department are very good. It is a large department and teachers work well together and support each other. There is a very good management structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. There are regular departmental meetings with opportunities for all staff to contribute. Documentation is comprehensive and informative for all staff. There are very good schemes of work to ensure pupils of all abilities are able to access the curriculum. The use of ICT is embedded in the curriculum and enhances both the subject and pupils' ICT skills. Assessment data is used very effectively to set targets, track progress and highlight underachievement. Good use has been made of the school's engineering status to appoint an advanced skills teacher to offer extra-curricular activities, for example master classes for able pupils and links with primary schools.
86. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards of attainment have improved in both Year 9 and Year 11. Achievement of pupils, particularly pupils with special educational needs, has also improved. They are able to use mathematical vocabulary appropriately. Overall, the quality of teaching has been maintained with particular improvements in teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11.

Mathematics across the curriculum

Pupils develop their mathematical skills satisfactorily in their work across subjects. In ICT they use formulae well when working with spreadsheets and in science they are able to draw accurate graphs.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- Effective and well structured planning of lessons is a major strength of the good quality of teaching.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is very good.
- Standards in science at GCSE are too low.
- There are very good links with primary schools.
- Pupils are very good at practical work.

Commentary

87. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average for all schools in 2003. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 and above was above the national average. The results dropped slightly from 2002, but have improved significantly since the previous inspection with the trend being above the national trend. In 2003 girls gained slightly higher results than boys. The results are well above those of pupils in similar schools based on their relative achievement in Year 6. Results in the 2003 GCSE

examinations in double award science were below average. There was little difference between the results of boys and girls. The small number of pupils who did the three separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics produced above average results.

88. By the end of Year 9, standards in science are average. This represents good achievement for many pupils in relation to their attainment on entering the school and includes those with special educational needs. Good strategies are employed which ensure that pupils of all abilities show very good practical skills that support their theoretical understanding of science. This was demonstrated in a Year 7 class of pupils with a range of abilities who carried out an experiment on the stretching of a spring and could use the appropriate scientific language to describe their practical work. The achievement of pupils with special ability in science is good. This is because of their motivation and positive attitude. However, there is insufficient structured challenging work to raise their achievement further.
89. By the end of Year 11, standards are average. This represents good achievement for many pupils considering they entered the school with below-average standards. The standards seen during the inspection were higher than those achieved in GCSE examinations. A change of syllabus to the twenty-first century science course is having the desired effect of improving standards. The modular approach has produced encouraging results in the early tests and there are distinct signs of improved achievement. This innovative course also gives pupils the opportunity to explore the world of work and visiting speakers come into school to talk about the NHS, forensic science and university opportunities. Their practical skills continue to improve. They make accurate observations in experiments. They collate, tabulate and analyse results effectively. Higher attaining pupils identify anomalies and can explain them. However, pupils of all abilities find evaluation difficult and this adversely affects their GCSE course work.
90. Teaching is good with some very good features. Strong features of the most effective teaching are thorough assessment of pupils' progress and careful planning of lessons. Assessment informing pupils how to improve is very good. They receive well-focused feedback on their work that helps them to understand and make good progress. Teachers check pupils' understanding in class by asking searching questions. This encourages pupils to develop their thinking skills by giving well thought out answers. Planning is strengthened by the sharing of innovative ideas and good practice. This increases the range of teaching strategies and helps to raise standards. The unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of pupils, mainly boys, slows progress in some lessons, not only for themselves but for others. The department is working on further developing their management skills to improve the attitudes of these pupils.
91. The raising of standards is the focus of a well managed department. The curriculum area leader has welded together a very large, effective team of teachers so there is a shared understanding of the factors which contribute to high standards. The leadership is good and places a high priority on helping teachers to develop their skills and share their very effective teaching methods. This has been extended into feeder primary schools where very good links have been established. An advanced skills teacher helps primary colleagues to develop their science curriculum and also their practical work. All secondary teachers have been trained to support the National Science Strategy and this is helping to raise achievement in practical work. Accommodation has improved since the previous inspection. However, a small number of lessons are taught in classrooms which impacts negatively on practical work or teacher demonstrations. The use of ICT has improved and the department fulfils its obligation to provide data logging experiences for all pupils by the end of Year 9. There has been a big investment in revision books. These allow pupils to support their school work with home study. Overall, the improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in specific ICT lessons has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory.
- ICT resources have been much improved over the last 12 months.
- Standards are below national expectations across all years.
- The department is now in a strong position to move forward and make good progress.

Commentary

92. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below national expectations. Most pupils continue to demonstrate low skill levels in ICT. There is evidence that standards are improving in Years 7 and 8 because pupils demonstrate a greater willingness to learn, have good attitudes and respond well. In lessons in Years 10 and 11, all pupils are now entered for the short course ICT GCSE. Performance from this first cohort entry was well below national expectations but this was as a result of historic problems with coursework and assessment. Achievement, overall, is satisfactory. Standards of work seen during the inspection show pupils to still be below average but improving from the very low standards recorded at the previous inspection. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is satisfactory overall. However, for some pupils there is no sense of urgency to complete coursework and the behaviour of some boys is unsatisfactory. This leads to unsatisfactory achievement for a small but significant number of pupils.
93. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It varies from unsatisfactory to very good. Lesson plans, although not consistent across the department, are generally well prepared. They make satisfactory use of available resources and have clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils. In the best lessons, consideration is given to differentiated tasks and different learning styles for low ability pupils. There is sensitive teacher intervention when faced with potential behavioural problems and most teachers demonstrate patience and tolerance when working with large mixed ability groups and identified special educational needs pupils.
94. The new leadership of the department is now good. There are indications that effective changes to the delivery of the subject are already starting to have an effect on upon pupil performance, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Management of the department is satisfactory. Assessment and pupil tracking is still under developed but this is identified as a key priority within improvement action plans. Day-to-day running of the department is efficient.
95. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Statutory requirements are being met and standards in Years 7 to 9 are improving. Although ICT resources have improved considerably since the previous inspection, teaching areas have become very crowded and untidy. This leads to some poor behaviour from a small number of pupils.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

Provision is **good**. A number of departments now have increased access to computers, but for some this is still an issue. There are good uses of ICT in mathematics, physical education, science and technology. However, pupils' lack of skills does hinder them using ICT in other subjects. The use of interactive whiteboards is beginning to have an effect upon teaching and learning across the school. Curriculum departments enter into innovative ICT contracts. This ensures that key aspects of the ICT programmes of study are delivered within a more appropriate context and this also helps to focus departments in recognising when and when not to use ICT within their own areas.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use this to plan lessons carefully.

- The recent GCSE examination results were not high enough.
- The good curriculum provides varied learning opportunities for all pupils.
- In a minority of lessons there is insufficient challenge for pupils.
- Good leadership and management have identified clear strategies for improvement.

Commentary

96. In 2003 the GCSE results for pupils in Year 11 were well below average and were low in relation to the same pupils' overall performance across other subjects. The non-validated results for 2004 were also well below average. Teacher assessments for Year 9 pupils indicate standards were slightly above average. However, standards seen during the inspection are broadly average in Year 9. They are below average in Year 11, but average in Year 10. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good and is now satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. This is because of improved teaching and learning in most lessons. Teaching and learning are now good overall. There is a greater emphasis on promoting higher order historical skills. All pupils achieve at a similar rate within their year group, including those with special educational needs, as teachers plan appropriate tasks for them.
97. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to present information clearly and provide pupils with stimulating resource material. In most lessons they provide effective encouragement, so that pupils remain on task. In a few lessons there is too little challenge and pupils' thinking is not developed sufficiently. Where teaching is occasionally unsatisfactory, the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils in the class takes too long to deal with and all pupils under achieve.
98. Leadership and management are now good and there are clear plans for further improvement. There is a good curriculum which draws upon varied source materials such as war poetry and eye-witness accounts. Good use is made of educational visits to support coursework. The growing use of information and communication technology promotes greater independence in learning. There is a conscious emphasis on subject vocabulary and promoting historical skills. The leadership of the department is committed to raising standards and management ensures there is a careful analysis of data with outcomes being shared between staff. It has clear priorities for improvement and progress from the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and this leads to good achievement in all years.
- Most lessons are creatively planned and skilfully delivered so that pupils approach their work with enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- Teaching and learning go hand in hand with assessment.
- The good practice which exists within the department is not always shared. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve their full potential in examinations.
- There are insufficient strategies to challenge the highest attainers in lessons.
- In a significant number of lessons the pace is too slow, which impedes pupils' learning.

Commentary

99. In 2003, GCSE results, were in line with the national average and were very similar to those of previous years. By the end of Year 9, assessments undertaken by teachers indicate that pupils' attainment, confirmed by the inspection, was above the national average.
100. In Year 7, pupils enter the school with below average levels of geographical knowledge. However, the well-structured curriculum in Years 7 to 9 enables good gains to be made in both knowledge and skills. Overall, achievement is good. The initial mapwork module ensures that they can interpret Ordnance Survey maps in some detail and this skill is put to very good use in the local study assessment later in the year. Pupils learn to consider issues, for example flood protection, from different points of view and in small group discussions all

pupils, including those with special needs, contribute to a very high level of debate. When pupils with special educational needs are given materials specifically to help them, their understanding is satisfactory. However, where these are not in place, pupils have difficulty in producing accurately labelled diagrams. In Years 10 and 11 the standards of work seen in lessons and in their books are good and so is their achievement. Pupils completing coursework use their knowledge of the work of rivers very well to describe changes in the course of the Burbage Brook. Hypotheses put forward by higher attainers, both boys and girls, are clearly stated and their evidence appropriately used. However, average and lower attainers do not always explain clearly enough what they are trying to prove and, as a result, they have difficulty organising their collected evidence into a coherent account.

101. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Lessons begin briskly and, although there is insufficient use of ICT, most include a good variety of graduated activities to keep pupils engaged and learning well. In some lessons this brisk start is not maintained. Tasks take too long or pupils are given too much time to do them, with the result that pupils become restless and lose concentration. The excellent assignment guides are a strength of the department. However, there are insufficient resources to challenge the highest attainers. Although use of assessment to plan for future learning and to gauge pupils' understanding and attainment is well developed, Key Stage 3 levels and GCSE grades are not used consistently enough to inform pupils of what they have done well and what they need to improve.
102. Good leadership and management have led to the formation of a strong, supportive team of colleagues who set high standards for themselves and their pupils. The department's work is formally and informally monitored well, schemes of work and teaching strategies are regularly reviewed. However, there is insufficient sharing of the very good practical expertise in order to apply successful strategies consistently. The department's performance is analysed using examination results and issues are fully addressed. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good. There are clear priorities for development.
- Overall, teaching is good and this contributes effectively to pupils' personal development and good achievement.
- GCSE results were below the national average in 2003, as were the unconfirmed results in 2004. Standards of GCSE work seen during the inspection were average.
- There is insufficient challenge for the more able in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

103. Standards attained by the current Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Overall, achievement is good because attainment on entry in Year 7 is below that expected for pupils of that age. By Year 9, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the principal religions studied. They are able to recognise the importance and significance of different religious practices on the lives of people. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are able to give views about religious issues. For example, in a Year 9 class looking at prayer in Islam, pupils considered and reflected on the implications of fulfilling one's religious duties in society today.
104. Standards in Year 11 in religious education, for those not following the GCSE course, are below those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. This is in part due to the lack of rigour in the range and challenge of learning activities. GCSE results in 2003 and the unconfirmed 2004 examinations were below average, although pupils gained similar grades to those attained in their other subjects. Standards of work seen in GCSE classes are, however, average and better than the recent examination results suggest. Pupils' achievement is good.

This is as a result of good teaching and high expectations of both work and behaviour. Pupils are able to discuss complex ethical issues in a mature and sensitive manner. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on abortion, pupils were able to recognise and reflect on different moral and religious viewpoints. Overall, achievement for the core programme and the GCSE course by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. Girls perform better than boys in examinations, as is the picture nationally.

105. Teaching is good overall. The best teaching is based upon good subject knowledge, clear expectations and effective use of questions. It leads to good learning. Relationships are good and teachers have a deep commitment to the welfare of the pupils. They also recognise the importance of the subject in contributing to raising pupils' awareness of cultural diversity as well as promoting pupils' spiritual development. There are, however, some shortcomings in teaching. In some classes the behaviour of a small number of pupils is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient challenge for the more able in Years 7 to 9 and the nature of the tasks given to them does not allow them to reach higher levels of attainment. This results in unfinished work and subsequent lower levels of attainment. Overall, support for those with special educational needs is good. Marking is variable. It is good in Years 10 and 11 GCSE but in Years 7 to 9 it is sometimes over generous and does not give sufficient guidelines on how to improve.
106. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear set of priorities for improvement. Assessment, tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress are good, although they are still in the early stages of development. The department supports citizenship well and has worked hard to promote the concept of global citizenship through its very good links with a school in Tanzania. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and the subject now meets statutory requirements.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is raising standards.
- Interesting activities ensure pupils enjoy their learning.
- Leadership of the department is very good.
- Assessment is informative and tells pupils how to improve.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average.

Commentary

107. In 2003, overall GCSE design and technology results were broadly in line with the national average. However, this represents good achievement by all pupils as their attainment on entry to the school is below average. There were significant differences between the subjects. Standards were highest in food, textiles and graphics. Standards have risen consistently for the last three years. The unconfirmed 2004 resistant materials results are very high and show a big improvement on previous years. Pupils' attainment in the past has, to some extent, been adversely affected by the lack of easy access to computers. This has limited the extent of their research and the quality of presentation in their coursework folders. Overall, standards seen in pupils' work during the inspection were in line with national averages. They make good use of the two new ICT suites and their coursework is better as a result. However, the lack of a colour printer means that pupils' work does not look as good as it does in most other schools. Pupils are encouraged to show originality and creativity. Teachers' advice is ensuring pupils constantly improve their work. This is increasing their GCSE coursework marks and raising standards.
108. Teacher assessments for Year 9 pupils in 2003 were above the national average. Work seen during the inspection was also above the national average. This represents good

achievement. Since the introduction of units of work involving computer-aided designing and making and robotics, pupils have been able to achieve above average standards. Pupils of all abilities are achieving well. Their practical skills are well developed. Pupils follow the design process well in all areas of their work. They quickly learn how to write design specifications and evaluate their finished artefacts against them. Pupils take a pride in their work and try to ensure a high quality finish.

109. Teaching and learning are good overall, although a significant amount of very good and excellent teaching was also observed during the inspection. Pupils benefit from well-qualified and hard-working teachers, who are keen to try out new ideas. For example, pupils in Year 7 are benefiting from special lessons which are designed to develop their thinking skills. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly. Activities are interesting and enjoyable, for example, the 'Ready, Steady, Cook' competition which enables Year 10 pupils to test their newly acquired skills in realistic situations. Relevant homework is set and pupils do it conscientiously. Teacher/pupil relationships are good. Effective advice is given to individuals, which helps them to improve. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to undertake more challenging activities and some of their work is of a high standard. The curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of visits, visitors and industrial links. For example, a hundred pupils have the chance to visit the 'Clothes Show'. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in local and national competitions and they achieve success.
110. Assessment of pupils' work is thorough and accurate. Older pupils are given detailed advice on what to include in their coursework folders and how to improve their practical work. Younger pupils are assessed frequently and have targets matched to their ability. For each unit of work, they are given pupil-friendly level descriptions so that they know how well they are doing and how to improve.
111. The curriculum area leader provides very good leadership. He is enthusiastic, willing to try new ideas and has a clear vision of the future development of the subject. He has high aspirations and provides a good role model for others to follow. Management is good and there is a good sense of teamwork, despite the very large number of staff involved. The work of the department is carefully monitored and good practice identified and shared. Data is thoroughly analysed and strengths and weaknesses identified.
112. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Engineering status has been achieved and this is now having a positive effect on learning and standards. It has provided the new ICT suite, which is now fully open and in regular use. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning and attitudes. The quality of teaching has improved and food technology is no longer a weakness. The curriculum is broader and fully meets statutory requirements. Industrial and community links have been extended.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years.
- Good assessment procedures enable pupils to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and identify targets for improvement.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of art movements and the work of artists.
- Good drawing and painting skills are developed as a result of well-focused and challenging activities.

Commentary

113. GCSE results in the range A*-C were average in 2003. Unconfirmed 2004 results show an improvement on these standards. Current standards seen are average in Years 10 to 11. This represents good achievement as pupils enter the school with standards below average. By the end of Year 9, standards are satisfactory. This is largely the result of very well-organised teaching. Lessons are characterised by good planning and clear objectives that are linked well to the requirements of the National Curriculum. Overall, achievement in these three years is good. Teacher assessments are accurate throughout the school and the tracking of progress and feedback to pupils is embedded into the practice of the department. Pupils know how to improve and can assess their own work and that of others. Pupils' work shows a rapidly growing confidence in the use of colour and texture, with bold bright studies and they gain great skill with pencil, producing intense studies of work by artists such as Hockney and Bacon. Pupils know and understand the work of many artists and art movements and how it could influence their own work.
114. Teachers maintain good pace and challenge by focused individual advice, encouraging pupils to think further and discover ideas for themselves. A wide range of materials and wet and dry media are used throughout the teaching and enables pupils to explore materials and media and discover ways of working that best suit them and maximise success. The work has scope and scale and matches the needs and interests of the pupils well. Painting and drawing are taught well as a result of focused tasks. Behaviour in lessons is, overall, satisfactory but a small but significant group of misbehaving pupils disturbs the teaching and learning of some classes, particularly in Year 9. Homework is set on a regular basis and high quality feedback is provided; however, not all pupils do the work and opportunities are, therefore, lost. The technical support is very good but more is needed for this intensely practical subject, for the preparation of materials and display. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and helped to progress as well as other pupils.
115. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The scheme of work has been revised and provides useful guidelines for staff. The subject department now has two newly qualified teachers who are very well supported and involved in the team approach to the department. There is a shared ambition to create a successful department with a clear focus on teaching and learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have risen and achievement remains good.

Drama

The provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Challenge and high expectations in lessons ensure that pupils achieve well.
- Supportive teaching enables pupils to explore characters and leads to in-depth performances.
- There are strong, caring and supportive relationships in the department.
- There is a good range of out of school activities.

Commentary

116. From a low level of attainment on entry pupils make good progress at the end of Year 9. The GCSE results in 2003 and the unconfirmed 2004 results are below national averages. However, the scrutiny of work and standards observed in lessons indicate that pupils in Year 11 attain standards in line with the national average.
117. By Year 11 pupils are confident in their exploration of character to help them create roles. This leads to strong, believable, naturalistic performances which communicate effectively to an audience. By the end of Year 9 pupils understand the importance of drama structures and use time sequences well to add depth to their work.

118. Teaching and learning are good overall and some very good teaching was observed. The degree of challenge and high levels of expectation ensure that pupils explore their drama making in depth. There is a strong emphasis on the development of physical and vocal skills in lessons. The constant questioning using how and why in lessons focuses the pupils' attention on techniques in performance. Teachers actively encourage pupils to evaluate each other's work in a positive way. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on naturalism the inappropriate aspirations of a young girl towards a job in TV presentation were explored. Pupils were able not only to develop their understanding of characterisation and status but also explore topical social issues.
119. The department is well led and managed by an enthusiastic curriculum area leader. Pupils have very detailed mark sheets for assignments which contain check lists of assessment objectives and evaluation by the teacher as well as self evaluation. These records indicate present levels and set targets for future progress and are a useful tool in helping pupils identify their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' assessments are recorded on a departmental spread-sheet which is then analysed and used to inform plans for the curriculum. The curriculum area leader monitors other members of the department on a regular basis and has weekly meetings with her line manager.
120. There is strong out of school provision. There are annual school productions, drama clubs, theatre visits, both locally and in London, and theatre practitioners from outside school visit pupils to involve them in workshops. The drama studios are spacious and contain good displays of drama vocabulary and other theatrical information.
121. There was very little information on drama in the previous inspection report but there has been improvement to the schemes of work for Years 7 to 9. The schemes focus on developing a strong skill base. This helps considerably in the preparation of pupils for the requirements of the GCSE course.

Music

The provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well planned lessons with good pace and varied activities ensure the commitment of pupils.
- There are caring and supportive pupil teacher relationships.
- Schemes of work are designed to suit the abilities of pupils and challenge and extend them.
- There is a wide range of out of school activities.

Commentary

122. From a below average level of attainment on entry, at the end of Year 9 pupils attain standards in line with national averages. This represents good progress, with boys succeeding as well as girls. Standards achieved at GCSE in 2003 and unconfirmed results in 2004 are below national averages. However, from the scrutiny of work and lessons observed in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection, standards are good. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.
123. By Year 11 pupils' compositions demonstrate good control of musical techniques and devices. They can adapt, develop and extend their musical ideas and perform accurately and with confidence. By Year 9 pupils use music vocabulary accurately and can create compositions using both harmonic and non-harmonic devices. They are aware of balance and the elements of music when they perform together in groups.
124. Teaching is good overall and some very good teaching was observed. Learning is also good. There is good use of inclusive questioning to re-enforce previous learning. Constructive evaluation of pupils' own work and that of others is encouraged and there is always emphasis on the correct use of music vocabulary. In a Year 7 lesson on melody and rhythm the

teacher's lively demonstration of the creation of a rhythm grid and the involvement of the class in clapping out the rhythms enthused the pupils. This led to some very creative patterns being made by the pupils who were happy to perform them to the rest of the group. The lively singing at the end of the lesson, with percussion accompaniment, underlined the concept of melody and rhythm in an enjoyable and practical way.

125. The subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic curriculum area leader. There is a very good rapport between the teachers, meetings are held weekly and observations are undertaken on a regular basis. A member of the senior management team monitors the curriculum area and provides valuable feedback. The schemes of work are creatively written to be accessible to all pupils and assessment sheets are used regularly to inform them of their levels and grades. Targets are realistically set and the pupil friendly level descriptors in all the Year 7 to Year 9 pupils' folders help them to recognise where they presently fit and how they can progress in the future.
126. There is good use of IT to support learning, a very good range of out of school activities and strong support from the peripatetic staff. The resources in the department are good and the new accommodation is pleasant, light and airy. The present lack of soundproofing does, occasionally, cause problems in lessons. Since the previous inspection more pupils have peripatetic lessons and the range of out of school activities has improved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Schemes of work and lessons are very well planned.
- Leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- The GCSE course is meticulously organised and monitored and this leads to good achievement.
- Some excellent teaching encourages pupils to work hard and achieve well.

Commentary

127. By the end of Year 9 the standards of both boys and girls in games, dance and gymnastics are generally average. In gymnastics, pupils work well but a great majority do not have a basic range of movements, nor do many transfer body weight onto their arms. In soccer most boys control and strike the ball effectively. Boys and girls remain well on task in dance lessons and improve the timing and choreography of their work. In a Year 8 netball lesson, girls of all ability levels made tangible progress in learning to shoot and score goals. Overall, achievement in Years 7 to 9 is average.
128. In Years 10 and 11, pupils on examination courses work very well and standards seen during the inspection were good. This is reflected in results which, over recent years, have been consistently in line with national averages. The best work is of a high standard, particularly that in which pupils research and record their findings. More able pupils have very good vocabulary, spelling and grammar which are demonstrated in their writing. Teachers monitor coursework very carefully and this helps to raise standards. A number of pupils, both boys and girls, attain very good results at GCSE each year. Any who are deemed to be falling below predicted grades are given extra tuition. Overall, their achievement is very good. It is disappointing that Year 11 pupils not taking GCSE get only one period of physical education per week. In the one core lesson seen, standards and achievement were good.
129. Overall, teaching and learning are good, although it varies from excellent to satisfactory. Where teaching is excellent, in theory lessons, pupils learn and achieve very well. Really thorough preparation and dynamic delivery ensure pace and purpose. Because teachers' expectations of them are high, pupils make substantial relevant contributions to discussions. They raise searching questions and debate issues well. In an aerobics lesson, theory and

practice were clearly linked and pupils learned about the effects of vigorous exercise on the cardio-vascular system. The standard of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Occasionally, in Years 7 to 9, teachers' expectations are not so high. Pupils are strongly encouraged to use ICT to produce homework.

130. Boys, girls and pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes towards physical education. Those with special needs are integrated into lessons and their tasks are adapted when necessary. Most pupils strive to improve. Teachers require pupils to co-operate and collaborate in lessons and this helps them to learn. Most lessons have good pace and clear purpose.
131. Leadership and management are both excellent. They have a strong impact on standards in the department. Evaluation, both of teachers' and pupils' performances, is detailed. This leads to improved attainment for pupils and a strong team approach amongst the staff. The curriculum area leader is very effective. She keeps practice in line with current developments and her management ensures that day-to-day running of the department is efficient. There is a very clear sense of direction. However, no room is allocated to the department for delivery of examination courses and this causes considerable difficulties for teachers.
132. Extra curricular provision is good. Many boys and girls, including those with special educational needs, regularly compete in sport at district level. A few are competing at national level. Some teams do well at local and regional levels. The department celebrates pupils' achievements. Clubs and inter-form competitions, provided at lunchtimes and after school, are very popular. Links with local sports clubs are strong. Improvements in the department since the previous inspection have been good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are consistently above average.
- The very good teaching and learning activities, including the use of ICT, motivate pupils.
- Pupils achieve well because of their positive attitudes to learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- In a small number of lessons low achievers do not have appropriate resources.
- Accommodation is cramped when there are large classes.

Commentary

133. Standards seen during the inspection were good. Results in GCSE are consistently above average. Girls' results are well above average and, although they have fallen since 2002, the boys' results have improved significantly. The results for girls and boys are higher than most subjects in the school.
134. Achievement is good. Pupils achieve well because they are interested in business studies and their positive attitudes enhance their ability to learn. Year 10 pupils collaborate enthusiastically in a role-play to explore how the building of a new supermarket will affect the local community. Year 11 pupils are starting to understand how to prepare a cash flow forecast for a company and the use of ICT to present the results is a good motivator. In a small number of lessons pupils with special educational needs do not achieve as well as they could because there are not enough appropriate resources.
135. Teaching and learning are very good. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and present new theory clearly so that pupils gain confidence in working with new concepts. Lessons are very well planned with a range of activities including opportunities to use ICT and

involve pupils actively in their learning. Learning objectives are shared so pupils clearly understand the purpose of the lesson. Questioning is used well to establish prior knowledge and build on it. Praise is used well to raise self-esteem and provide a secure learning environment. The quality of marking and assessment is good and pupils benefit from guidance to improve their work. Pupils know their targets and the majority of pupils are keen to work hard to achieve the predicted grades. Learning support assistants, when available, provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs so that they can achieve well.

136. The experienced curriculum area leader has a clear vision and continuously strives for improvement. The positive team spirit amongst the teachers ensures that they use their individual experiences and personal skills to develop teaching in the subject. Examination results are thoroughly reviewed, the views of Year 11 pupils are sought and the outcomes used for action planning and developing teaching strategies. Data is used very well for target-setting and progress is tracked well. The recent acquisition of computers has led to a cramped desk space in the teaching room and when there are large classes it is difficult for teachers to monitor progress effectively in order to provide individual support for pupils.
137. Business Studies has made good improvement since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

It was only possible to observe a limited number of lessons of personal, social and health education. The personal, social and health education programme is well structured. Overall, teaching is good, although there is a variation across the school. Key issues relating to health, drugs, sex and careers education are well covered. However, opportunities to develop pupils' maturity across the curriculum, beyond the personal, social and health education lessons, are sometimes missed. This is particularly true for pupils' spiritual development.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to become responsible and informed citizens.
- Leadership and management ensure all pupils have good curricular access.
- The GCSE course motivates all pupils and gives them a recognised target for achievement.
- In the school year 2003-04 boys' achievement was below that of girls.

Commentary

138. The 2004 teacher assessments in Year 9 indicate standards are satisfactory overall, although girls' attainment is higher than boys'. In the GCSE short course in 2004, non-validated results show pupils achieved satisfactory standards overall; however, girls achievement was significantly better than boys'.
139. Standards seen during the inspection match age-related expectations in Year 9 and in Year 11 and are, therefore, satisfactory. Standards of teaching and learning are good through Years 7 to 11 and, as a result, achievement is good in most lessons.
140. Teaching and learning are good. In Years 7 to 9 pupils are encouraged to express valid opinions upon different issues such as propaganda and most pupils have the ability to collaborate effectively in group work. Most pupils develop an appropriate range of skills through discussion and use them well to express opinions and form judgements.
141. In Year 10, pupils complete a project rooted in the community. They develop a broad range of skills, including those of communication, organisation and investigation. Pupils learn to work

independently, frequently to the benefit of the community, for example, by organising a pet grooming initiative to raise money for the RSPCA. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology to research topics and present their findings. The project is part of the GCSE short course in citizenship and in Year 11 all pupils follow the taught examination course. The good teaching in Year 11 ensures pupils steadily acquire a range of skills that support their examination studies well. It helps them develop a sense of responsibility and makes them better informed about the world around them.

142. The citizenship curriculum has been introduced effectively because the school's leadership has recognised its importance in promoting broad educational objectives such as increasing pupils' self-confidence. There is a good range of strategies in place to ensure equal access for all pupils. The good quality curriculum is innovative in introducing the examination course and in involving the community extensively. For example, the citizenship day brings a wide range of visitors into school to work with pupils. Appropriate assessment arrangements are in place that ensure all reporting requirements are met. The newly appointed co-ordinator has analysed past results and is actively planning a strategy to ensure both boys and girls achieve their maximum potential.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth form

In the inspection, 11 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English language	36	86.1	82.9	16.7	17.5	30	28.7
English literature	17	88.2	85.9	23.5	19.1	32.4	30.2
Mathematics	23	82.6	61.9	21.7	17.1	30.9	22.1
Further mathematics	1	100		100		60	
Biology	30	76.7	65.2	10	11.1	26	20.6
Chemistry	11	63.6	72.7	9.1	13.9	21.8	24.1
Physics	16	56.3	68.6	0	14.4	17.5	22.7
ICT	15	53.3	67	0	10.9	14.0	21.4
Economics and business studies	13	76.9		53.8		40.0	
Art and design	9	88.9	100	11.1	23.7	33.3	29.9
Geography	23	87.0	74.3	52.2	19.8	40.0	26.5
History	9	100	80.7	44.4	19.5	42.2	28.6

Psychology	46	84.8	69.7	47.8	16.7	38.5	24.1
Drama and theatre studies	8	100		37.5		37.5	
Film studies	12	100		58.3		50	
French	4	75	78	0	19	22.5	27.6
German	7	85.7	81.5	0	19.3	25.7	28.9
Design and technology (product design graphics/resistant materials)	9	100		33.3		38.9	
Design and technology (product design textiles)	11	100		54.5		46.4	
Food technology	7	85.7		14.3		31.4	
Physical education	11	90.9	73.2	54.5	11.4	46.4	32.1
General studies	78	85.9	73.9	17.9	17.8	29.6	25.7

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
English language	23	95.7	99.4	17.4	36.3	72.2	80.9
English literature	12	100	99.5	8.3	46.5	68.3	86.5
Mathematics	11	100	96.7	45.5	55.6	81.8	88.8
Biology	12	91.7	96.4	41.7	39.2	80	78.6
Chemistry	8	100	99.4	75	49	100	84.9
Physics	9	88.9	96.7	55.6	44.6	71.1	81.7
ICT	14	92.9	95.6	21.4	24.6	64.3	69.5
Business studies and economics	9	100	98.7	33.3	36.8	73.3	80.1
Art & design	7	100	98.6	14.3	50.2	68.6	87.5
Geography	8	100	98.7	25	44.5	70	84

History	5	100	99	0	44.6	60	84.6
Psychology	33	84.8	97.4	24.2	42.7	63.6	81.8
Drama and theatre studies.	5	100	99.5	0	40.1	64	83.6
Film studies	8	100	99.4	12.5	37.8	85	82.1
German	2	100	98.4	50	47.9	90	84.8
Sports and PE studies	6	100	98	33.3	50.9	80	75.2
Design and technology (product design)	23	87	97.8	47.8	35	78.3	77.9

N.B No national figures are available when the numbers of students entered are very small and are not statistically valid.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in A-level English literature improved to the national average in 2004 and standards of work in Years 12 and 13 indicate good achievement.
- Very good subject knowledge enables teachers to promote good extended discussions.
- Students are encouraged to read widely and they use this experience productively.
- Teaching rooms are too small for the size of groups and this limits opportunities for some activities.
- Students starting English language courses in Year 12 are not always fully aware of how different the subject is from English at GCSE level.

Commentary

143. Ninety-four students are following English language and literature courses at AS and A-level. The rate at which students stay on at school in this subject are good. Results at AS level in

2003 indicated attainment at around the national average. Unconfirmed results for 2004 also suggest average standards and this is reflected in work seen during the inspection.

144. Results in 2003 at A-level in both language and literature showed pass rates at above the national average, although a smaller proportion of students gained the highest grades than occurs nationally. Unconfirmed results for 2004 show better than average standards in English literature. Results in English language are slightly lower than average. Standards in both subjects in work seen during the inspection were broadly at the national average with slightly higher standards in English literature. This represents good achievement as students starting the courses had a higher than average proportion of lower grade passes.
145. In English language in Year 12, students develop an understanding of language varieties, the salient features of language used in different social contexts and the specific terminology of this area of study. Initially they find such terminology and concepts difficult because the course is so different from GCSE English. By Year 13 most students demonstrate good knowledge of different language types and are more adept at theorising about these. In English literature students in Year 12 develop views of their own and aptly justify these with good use of quotations and textual references. By Year 13 they have developed enough independence in thinking to enjoy debating different interpretations of texts and arguing at length about authors' intentions. Their essays show a great control over style and structure and the ability to answer questions in a focused fashion. Thus, one student in a comparison of three poems opened her consideration succinctly but fittingly "Although seemingly inspired by the same muse, Autumn, the poems have little else in common with regard to subject matter."
146. The quality of teaching and learning is good. No teaching is less than good and in nearly half the lessons it is very good. An essential element of the best teaching is the very good subject knowledge of teachers. Thus, in a Year 12 lesson on *The Handmaid's Tale* the teacher was able to answer students' queries with a range of references both to the text itself and to other books in an immediate response that created further opportunities for discussion. A further benefit of the very good subject knowledge is the way in which this is used to encourage and advise upon wider reading. In neither language nor literature does the teaching merely focus on examination requirements without regard for wider aspects of the subject. Lessons are enjoyable and in a lively discussion on accent and dialect in a Year 12 language lesson there was a growing realisation by the students that not only was this an enjoyable area to discuss but there were important social and political considerations inherent in the topic. Assessment of students' work is very accurate and students are well informed as to their progress. Students respond well to the good quality of teaching and are enthusiastic about the subject. It is to the credit of teachers that the unsatisfactory rooms that are used for many of the lessons do not impinge to a greater extent on the quality of teaching and learning. Such rooms are too small for the groups so to rearrange groups or even pairs of students causes difficulties.
147. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is good knowledge of students' potential and careful, shared consideration on how best to help them achieve this. Communication between staff about all aspects of sixth form English is good. The only issue raised in the previous report was the lack of confidence shown by students during discussions. There has been good progress in this area.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

148. Standards of language and literacy are good. In many lessons students demonstrate the ability to read demanding texts and show good knowledge of specialised terminology in both speaking and writing. There is good provision for the development of such skills with particularly good opportunities for discussions in English, mathematics and geography. The teaching of literacy is generally good with teachers requiring increasing precision in writing and increasing use of relevant vocabulary. In art there is good use of assessment to focus on improving language use. English teachers expose students to a wide variety of language types. In ICT greater support is required for those who struggle with complex terminology.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good strategies to enable students to transfer from GCSE to advanced level study.
- Students benefit from having specific lessons which emphasise particular skills
- Students display positive attitudes towards learning French and speak highly of the support they receive from their teachers
- The use of the French language is not consistently used in lessons.

Commentary

149. In recent years the number of students entered for examinations and their levels of attainment in French have been variable. The small numbers of candidates for both AS and A-level mean that comparison with national performance data is unreliable. In Years 12 and 13, evidence from the lessons observed and from students' files indicates that achievement is good, although standards seen were average.
150. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and communicate their enthusiasm for their subject to their students. They draw on a broad repertoire of teaching strategies to provide a variety of approaches in lessons, to revise what students already know and to promote the active engagement of students. Homework is used by teachers to both reinforce and extend what students learn in lessons. The difficulty that students experience when moving from GCSE to AS level is being tackled through the timetabling of lessons which seek to fill specific gaps in the students' knowledge, for example grammar. The use of French as the normal means of communication by both teachers and students is inconsistent and this restricts students' opportunities to develop their listening skills.
151. In Year 12 students show good recall of language structures they have been taught and are developing the ability to express a point of view and to marshal arguments with regards to issues of interest to young people. By the end of one Year 12 lesson students were able to write a letter in French expressing their opinions with regards to the punishment of juvenile delinquents. Careful planning included the introduction of progressively more challenging but feasible activities. This ensured that students became familiar with, and finally had the capacity to use, some more complex and sophisticated language with which they would have not met at GCSE.
152. The leadership and management of the department are good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- Students' attitudes to work are good. They are comfortable and confident to seek help and advice to overcome any difficulties.
- Extra classes to support less confident students allow all to participate fully in the curriculum.
- Teachers do not always encourage students to contribute to discussions.

Commentary

153. Results in 2003 were above average compared to the national standard. Standards of attainment have increased over the last three years, including unconfirmed 2004 results particularly at AS level. Standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with the national average.

154. Students with intermediate GCSE are encouraged to try an AS level in mathematics, which means that, overall, students enter the sixth form with below average GCSE results. These students are offered support classes after school to bridge the gap in their knowledge. These are well attended. By the end of Year 13, students' achievement is good. Students in Year 12 can divide algebraic expressions. There is no difference in achievement between boys and girls.
155. Teaching and learning are good in both Year 12 and 13. Good questioning is used to find out what students know before progressing further. All teachers have good knowledge of the subject. They demonstrate new ideas well and ensure that students grasp new ideas. Tasks are given to allow all students to work at their level of ability. However, sometimes students are a little quiet and reluctant to join in discussions. They are confident that teachers are available and approachable to sort out any difficulties they find. Students are asked to share their answers and proofs to the group to enable them to articulate their ideas and support their peers' learning. Teachers use ICT well to support mathematical concepts and encourage independent research.
156. Both leadership and management of the department are very good. It is a large department and the team share ideas and support each other well. There are common schemes of work which are shared with students, along with exam questions and model answers, so students are aware of what is expected by the end of the course. All policies and procedures for assessment, setting targets and tracking students are continued from the main school into post-16. These are good and ensure consistency.
157. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is good. Results have improved well in both Year 12 and Year 13. There has been sustained good teaching in all years.

Mathematics across the curriculum

Students' mathematical standards in the sixth form are good. There is a numeracy module in physics to ensure that students have the mathematical skills required for the course and in Year 12 business studies students use calculators well to work out cash flow.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and leads to students having a very good attitude to learning.
- Management is very good.
- There is a very good range of modern textbooks, specialist magazines and off prints.
- The coursework is much improved.
- Some lessons are taught out of laboratories.

Commentary

158. The advanced level results in 2003 were above the national average with all students achieving a pass. Forty per cent achieved the higher grades of A and B which is in line with the national average. In this area, boys did better than girls. The number of students studying biology has fluctuated since the previous inspection, but numbers have risen in the last two years. The staying-on rate of students from Year 12 to Year 13 has been good and the majority complete the course.

159. Standards in the current Year 12 and Year 13 are above national expectations. This represents very good achievement for many of the students who enter the sixth form with a full range of GCSE pass grades. Many advanced level students in 2003 demonstrated good achievement based on their predicted grades from GCSE.
160. Students have a very positive attitude to their studies and, as a result, have made considerable gains in knowledge and understanding since GCSE. Year 12 students have a very good knowledge of how cells divide and Year 13 students understand how impulses are transmitted along nerve cells. Most students are very competent in ICT and numeracy and have been taught how to use statistics. This helps them to analyse large populations of plants in ecology.
161. Teaching is very good and this has led to very good learning. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of biology and this allows them to clarify any misconceptions the students may have. The coursework is much improved because the staff have produced supportive material enabling students to achieve higher grades. The notes students receive from teachers are well supported by a wealth of up-to-date texts. Some lessons are taught in small classrooms and this reduces the opportunities to do class practical work and teacher demonstrations. Students know what they need to do to improve as a result of regular testing and focused feedback using examination board criteria and grades.
162. Leadership in biology is good. The management of the subject is very good and the head of biology ensures that students are aware of how well they are doing. There is a focus on ensuring high standards. Innovative teaching strategies, for example modelling, have helped students to raise standards. There is a high priority placed on sharing good practice, which exposes the students to a wider range of strategies and therefore improves their learning. The use of ICT has improved since the previous inspection. Students use ICT in sense and control units. Here they use probes to detect temperature changes and plot their results as a graph on laptop computers. This gives them a better understanding of mechanisms in their bodies.

Physics

Provision for advanced physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a wide range of teacher knowledge and expertise which is well deployed across the department.
- Effective planning ensures that a good range of learning opportunities is provided across the department.
- The greater use of ICT is increasingly motivating and engaging students in their learning and improving the pace of lessons.

Commentary

163. Standards have been below the national standard for a number of years with girls performing better than boys. There are, however, small numbers of girls involved. The number of students continuing to A-level is poor. This can be linked to inconsistent monitoring of individual targets and achievement. Attainment is average in Year 13. However, in the current Year 12 it is above average.
164. Teaching and learning are good. Specialists in mathematical physics and material science are able to provide informative lessons. A good range of learning opportunities is provided. As a

result of numeracy support during a lesson on standard deviation and percentage errors, students made rapid progress in their understanding. Students demonstrated their competency in the use of scientific calculators and spreadsheets for calculations. ICT is being used in an array of ways from modelling and simulations in lessons to the use of sensors during practical sessions. Boys and girls work together co-operatively on experimental activities in Year 12 and team working is being encouraged. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

165. Students use their lesson time well and through the use of homework, which is mainly calculations, students' understanding and achievement is assessed and further support put in place if needed. Through the use of research topics such as resistivity in Year 12 and revision sites for Year 13, students widen their knowledge and understanding of the subject and develop skills of independent learning. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There are systems in place for performance management, lesson observation and data analysis, but the sharing of good practice and systematic monitoring of targets have not been developed sufficiently in order to improve standards further.
166. Since the previous inspection the staffing has improved. A new course has been started with modern textbooks and detailed fact sheets. Resources, including multimedia projectors and internet access, have improved. Engineering college status is providing opportunities for the department to enhance and update its equipment, including digital meters, sensors and interactive whiteboards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students show good attitudes to work and achieve well.
- Teaching is well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge.
- GCE A-level and AS results were well below the national average in 2003.
- A narrow range of courses provides few opportunities for engaging students, especially girls, in specialist ICT activities.

Commentary

167. The main provision offered are AS and A-level courses. The lack of girls being attracted to advanced level ICT courses is still an issue, as at the time of the previous inspection.
168. Standards in the 2003 GCSE AS and A-level examinations were below the national average. Standards seen during the inspection, however, were at the national average and better than previous examination results would suggest. Overall, students achieve well, but those who begin advanced level courses with poor GCSE attainment find courses more challenging and achieve less well. There are no vocational opportunities provided in the subject which would be better geared to the needs of some students. Students work well as individuals but also provide very good support for one another. Positive attitudes to the subject are demonstrated.
169. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is sufficiently flexible to facilitate independent learning and good research techniques whilst also able to deliver effective whole group teaching. Students consider the balance of support from teachers to be just about right. Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
170. Leadership and management of the department are now good. Good leadership creates good teamwork and, as a result, the students feel well supported. The new curriculum area leader is knowledgeable and is able to keep students on track.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

171. There is good use of ICT across the school in the sixth form, but this is used predominantly to support students in their own research rather than as a tool in other subjects. However, there were good examples where ICT was used to support the teaching of science and technology. Students enjoy open access to ICT resources around the school and they are appreciative of this opportunity and trust.

HUMANITIES

172. The focus of the inspection was on geography and psychology, although history and religious education were also sampled.
173. In history, students study an appropriately challenging A-level course in modern history. This provides good opportunities for them to develop a wide range of advanced skills and a detailed understanding of political forces that have shaped international society. Students have positive views on the value of the course, recognising links into higher education and employment. From limited evidence, teaching and learning are good and standards are as expected for students in Year 13.
174. Provision for religious education in the sixth form was sampled. Documentation and some students' work were examined and one AS lesson observed. Teaching was good. There is a good range of support materials, study guides and exemplar material which gives a good overview and clear indication of expectations. Religious education is also delivered as part of a general studies course and statutory requirements are met.

Geography

Provision in geography **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject and of the demands of the examination to ask probing questions which deepen students' understanding of issues and concepts.
- Students have a very good attitude to their work so that their personal research is completed to a very high standard.
- Regular assessment gives students an accurate knowledge of their achievement and of what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

175. In 2003, the number of students sitting the examination was too small for national comparisons, but all completed the course successfully, gaining pass grades from B to E. At the end of the course in 2004, unconfirmed results indicate that, overall, students' results were higher than expected when judged against prior attainment.
176. Achievement is good in Years 12 and 13. Students' very good attitudes to their studies enable them to make good progress, building up detailed portfolios of work which include significant amounts of personal research. Overall, standards seen in lessons during the week were good. Students demonstrate a very good breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding when they present case studies on, for example, the world's separatist movements. The presenters ensure that information is shared with their colleagues as their handouts are detailed and comprehensive.
177. Good teaching ensures that students have a good balance of learning opportunities. Teachers have high expectations of them so that presentations are fully researched and case study materials are well used to augment their arguments when answering examination and essay questions. Teachers' contributions to presentation sessions are particularly valuable to

students' understanding when setting topics in the global context or clarifying issues through very focused questioning. Students are aware of their standard of performance. Assignments are carefully marked and the teachers' evaluative comments on written work are helpful and detailed. However, there is a mixture of marks and grades to indicate the quality of students' work and this can be confusing when students wish to chart their progress over the term.

178. Leadership and management are good. Strategies are in place to ensure that the work of the department is reviewed regularly. There has been a significant increase in the number of students taking the subject. The curriculum area leader ensures that there is good liaison between members of the teaching teams and that students are monitored effectively. Since the previous inspection the high standard of work in the department has been maintained.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and students achieve well.
- Teachers bring to lessons a considerable depth and breadth of knowledge.
- Homework is very well organised and used effectively to develop independent enquiry.
- Students enjoy their studies and see the point of what they learn in understanding their own lives.
- Occasionally, there are missed opportunities to extend students' understanding through more effective questioning.
- The arrangements by which A2 students are assessed in all modules at the end of Year 13 do not work to the advantage of the students involved.

Commentary

179. Students join the course in Year 12 with below average levels of attainment overall in their GCSE examinations, but with particular weaknesses in writing. Psychology is a new subject for all of them. They are slow to adjust to AS level study but settle in gradually and soon begin to develop more refinement in writing and in presenting their views orally. They reach average standards in examinations. There was a dip in 2003, but the current Year 12 and Year 13 students are set to continue the rising trend and reach average and above average results respectively. Female students generally do better than male students in Year 12. Most students continue their studies into Year 13, when progress speeds up, with an increasing number reaching higher grades and the gap between the attainment of males and females narrowing. Standards in work seen were good. Work in both years indicates good achievement for all students. Most students stay to the end of their course and a significant number intend to study psychology at college or university.
180. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Lessons are stimulating as teachers are skilled at relating what they teach to the interests and sensibilities of the students. This is particularly evident in the setting and assessment of homework, when students come to respect their own critically formed ideas. Students, in turn, see the subject as a means to deepening their understanding of themselves and of others. In the best lessons, students are encouraged to express their views and justify them. As a result, there are many examples of lively discussion and the critical analysis of the variety of standpoints taken by psychologists. Students are prepared well for examinations and get a good grounding in research and statistical methods to support their investigations. Students who experience difficulties with the language of psychology are supported well in their work. Occasionally, lessons are less successful when questioning does not deepen students' understanding.
181. The department is very well led and managed. The curriculum area leader has established a clear sense of direction and common purpose. A strength is the range of specialist expertise involved in the teaching of psychology. The very good range of books and other materials in the library and available on the Internet is used well to support independent study. Standards

have improved over the years as a result of careful monitoring of the progress of individual students and the quality of the care and guidance available to all. The crowding of all Year 13 assessments into the final weeks of the year do not serve the interests of the students well as it prevents effective revision. Accommodation for sixth form groups is cramped.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection did not include these subjects. However, design and technology, graphics and food technology were sampled. Teaching and learning was good. Support for individual students was good and enabled them to make progress. Overall, standards seen were average. Students used the internet confidently to carry out their research. They were focused on the tasks set, able to work independently and helped each other as appropriate.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good and are key factors in the standards attained.
- Current standards are well above average.
- Mature and positive attitudes and behaviour contribute to the very effective learning.
- There is innovative use of materials for sculpture and the exploration of students' ideas.
- There is very good use of digital manipulation software to create highly personal responses to problems.
- ICT provision within the department is insufficient.

Commentary

182. A-level results and AS results in 2003 show an overall trend of rising standards, but the numbers taking these examinations were too small to reliably compare to national standards. Numbers are increasing year on year and unconfirmed 2004 results indicate standards to be above average. Standards seen are well above average and represent very good achievement as a result of very good planning and very good teaching. Achievement is very good as subject knowledge and course content are carefully presented by a team of teachers each offering a different expertise and experience. Well-focused lessons enable students to understand the assessment criteria and the requirements of the examination specification very well. The students know their weaknesses and their strengths and are well guided by experienced and enthusiastic teaching staff. Students are very articulate and their work is strongly individual. All enjoy the choices and freedoms that these well-planned courses offer. Gallery visits have strongly influenced student work and have produced many very strong responses and bold individual studies.

183. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Students are mature and very positive. They work hard and enjoy the mature way that teaching staff treat them. Carefully prepared resources, clearly stated aims and objectives and well-communicated subject knowledge result in very effective learning. Many opportunities for very personal responses to problems are created by the staff with highly innovative use of materials like glass and foil to create sculptures and experimentation. Students enjoy this freedom and respond very well. Digital image making using computer software is very good and has created lively images and very high quality responses to problems, although access is very limited to computers for this group of students in this subject. Currently there is insufficient ICT provision for this course. This makes it difficult for students to access suitable software and image manipulation hardware.

184. The department and subject are very well led and managed. The students benefit from the range of expertise, opinion and interests that the team of teachers bring to this subject. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, particularly in relation to improved standards and achievement.

BUSINESS

Economics and business (AS level).

Provision in economics and business at AS and A-level is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS and A level results continue to improve..
- Students achieve well because of their positive attitudes to learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge when introducing new theory.
- Students do not have enough opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning or to use ICT.

Commentary

185. Standards are average and improving. Advanced level results in 2003 were average. The unconfirmed results for 2004 show significant improvement in the number of A/B grades achieved by both girls and boys.
186. Achievement is good because advanced students are interested in their work, are highly motivated and willing to learn.
187. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use the links between economics and business well for the benefit of students on this advanced course. Teachers share examination techniques well with students by using a good range of teaching methods effectively to help students learn. In a small minority of lessons there is not enough opportunity for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers provide high level guidance when introducing new theories, particularly at AS level. When given the opportunity, students collaborate well to share knowledge and this leads to better understanding. Learning objectives are shared so students clearly understand the purpose of the lesson and teachers use questioning well to review and consolidate learning. However, in a small number of lessons there was not enough time for review. Praise is used well to raise self-esteem and provides a secure learning environment. There are good procedures for marking and assessing students' written work and teachers ensure that students know how to improve their work. Advanced students do not have enough opportunity to use ICT.
188. Leadership and management are very good. The experienced curriculum leader has a clear vision and continuously strives for improvement. The positive team spirit ensures that all teachers use their individual experiences and personal skills to improve teaching and broaden what is offered in the subject. Examination results are thoroughly reviewed, the views of Year 11 pupils are sought and this feedback is used well for action planning and developing teaching strategies. Data is used very well for target-setting and progress is tracked very well, being a positive motivator for students.

Intermediate GNVQ business education

Provision for intermediate GNVQ business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because of the good teaching.
- Very good leadership and management.
- Strong support from teachers builds student confidence.

- Students use ICT well for research and developing presentation skills.
- Good opportunity to use business for research.

Commentary

189. Examination results in the intermediate GNVQ are average. Unconfirmed results in 2004 were an improvement on previous years and all students passed the examination.
190. Achievement is good. GNVQ students enter the sixth form with lower than average prior learning and they achieve well because of the good guidance and support which builds their confidence.
191. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge of business and use a range of innovative teaching methods effectively to help students learn, especially in the merchandising unit. Teachers introduce new theory well and strong support ensures students understand but not always enough opportunity for students to work independently. Students make good use of ICT for research and they are developing their skills in presenting information. Where students lack confidence their teachers do their best to encourage them to take part. Praise is used well to raise self-esteem and provides a secure learning environment. There are good procedures for marking and assessing written work and teachers ensure that students know how to improve their work.
192. Leadership and management are very good. The experienced curriculum leader has a clear vision and continuously strives for improvement. There is a positive team spirit. Teachers are well deployed to use their individual experiences and personal skills to broaden what is offered in the range of GNVQ optional units. Data is used very well for target setting and progress is tracked very well and this is a good motivator for students. There are good links with business and industry and this provides an opportunity for students to learn at first-hand.

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	3	3
How inclusive the school is		3
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	3	3
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	3	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		4
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	2	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4

The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	5	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3

The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3
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).