

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Formby High School**

Liverpool/Merseyside

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104949

Headteacher: Mr Brian Rourke

Lead inspector: Mike McLachlan

Dates of inspection: 20 - 24 September 2004

Inspection number: 268808

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

© Crown copyright 2004-05

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-19
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	885
School address:	Freshfield Road Formby Liverpool Merseyside
Postcode:	L37 3HW
Telephone number:	01704 873100
Fax number:	01704 831748
Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Malcolm Parry
Date of previous inspection:	26 April 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Formby High School is a comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 19. The school roll has increased by over a hundred students, to 885, since the last inspection and this includes an increase of over 40 students in the sixth form. This is due to the growing popularity and confidence the school enjoys in the community. As at the time of the last inspection, most of the students live in Formby but about one-third come from the neighbouring areas of Ainsdale, Birkdale, Southport, Crosby, Bootle and Seaforth. Overall, students' attainment on entry to the school has improved since the last inspection and is now just above average, although the school has students with the full range of ability and a small but significant proportion of students with below average reading ages. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is average. Overall in the main school and in the sixth form there are slightly fewer of the most able students than the national norm. In the main school the proportion of students with special educational needs is close to the national average, but the proportion with Statements of Special Educational Needs is below the national average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals has increased and is now around the national average. The numbers of students who have English as an additional language or who are from ethnic minority groups are very small.

At the time of the last inspection about two-thirds of the students continued full-time studies at the end of Year 11 and 50 per cent of these entered the sixth form. While the numbers staying on remain the same, the proportion staying on at Formby High sixth form has increased to nearly 80 per cent of those staying on in sixth form or college. Approximately two-thirds of the students who have left after the age of 17 have proceeded to higher education and the vast majority of the rest into employment. The school has achieved performing arts college status in conjunction with Maghull High School. This joint provision has been called Sefton Arts College and this name reflects the excellent relationships enjoyed with many primary schools and partner organisations across the LEA.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3654	Mike McLachlan	Lead inspector	
9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector	
23082	Graham Loach	Team inspector	Mathematics
2049	David Klemm	Team inspector	English
17799	Anthony Stoddart	Team inspector	Science
33055	Jim Sparkes	Team inspector	Information and communications technology
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Art and design
17156	Ted Graham	Team inspector	Design and technology
33015	Richard Winter	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs English as an additional language
32340	Peter McKay	Team inspector	History Citizenship
21855	Dennis Carty	Team inspector	Business education Modern foreign languages Work-related learning
8360	Frederick Peacock	Team inspector	Music
31037	Ann Barwell	Team inspector	Physical education
30818	Martin Pope	Team inspector	Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

ALTECQ INSPECTIONS LTD  
102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL53 7JX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS</b>	<b>11</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>15</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES –</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORMS</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>53</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Formby High school is a **very good** school with some outstanding features. Students achieve **very well** in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is **good** and has the capacity to improve further. Teaching is **very good**, as is the leadership of the school. Notwithstanding the many current successes, the headteacher, senior team and governors, together with all staff are resolutely committed to further improvement. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership of the head and the clear vision for improvement - a vision made manifest by the very good leadership of the governors and senior and middle managers, with the full support of all staff.
- The very good involvement with national and local strategies which have led to the very good teaching and learning and improving standards of attainment.
- The very good attitudes and involvement of the students in their academic studies and the vast range of extra-curricular opportunities available.
- The very good partnerships with other schools, parents and the community, through the joint Performing Arts College, the Creative Partnerships Merseyside, the excellent transition programmes and the shared post-16 provision.
- The very good care, guidance and support of all students and in particular those with special educational needs.
- The excellent use of extra funds to raise attainment and widen experiences.
- The excellent provision in art and music.
- Assessment of students' work and reports to parents do not always indicate sufficiently what students need to do in order to improve.
- There are insufficient vocational or other opportunities available in Years 10 to 11 and the sixth form in order to fully meet the needs of all students.
- There is insufficient time available to ensure all students receive their entitlement for religious education, personal and social education and citizenship.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. Examination results are good and improving. Leadership has improved and the school now evaluates its work very well. Support for special educational needs is now a real strength of the school's provision. The school has gained Performing Arts status and has used this together with a clear focus on teaching and learning to raise standards and provide a rich educational experience for all students.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### Year 11 and 13 results

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

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

For Year 11, \* is best eight subjects and similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Overall standards of achievement are **good**. In Years 7 to 9 achievement overall is very good. Standards and test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average but below what would be expected given the students' prior attainment. In 2004, however, there was a significant improvement and students achieved above expectations in English and science and particularly in mathematics. Standards of work seen across all subjects were at least above average and often well above average. Results are improving at a much faster rate than is seen nationally. Standards of the current Years 10 and 11 are above average and achievement is good. GCSE results rose significantly after the last inspection and have been maintained at an above average level compared

to all schools and well above the performance of schools with similar prior attainment at the end of Year 9 and with a similar social mix. Achievement in art is exceptional. The small number of students from different minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers, as do students with special educational needs. The school contributes **very well** to the students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Overall attitudes and behaviour and attendance are very good. Students are active citizens and take part in and enjoy all the school has to offer.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching is **very good** because the school has made very good use of national and local strategies and initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Teachers plan lessons that have pace and variety and often use new technology well. The curriculum is good and there is an excellent range of well attended extra-curriculum activities. Performing arts status has broadened the curriculum overall. Opportunities for vocational courses have improved but there is scope for further improvement to meet the needs of all students. The school provides good support, advice and guidance and students feel very well cared for and safe at school. There are very good links with parents. Links with other schools and colleges and with the community are excellent

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good** and this is clearly seen in the very good improvements since the last inspection. The governors support and challenge the work of the school well, take a keen interest in the school and use their individual skills and expertise very well. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. The senior team are very good and provide complementary skills ensuring effective leadership and management of the school. Middle managers are also good leaders at a whole-school level as well as in their departments and are clearly focused on improving the school from its current very good position.

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

Parents speak highly of the school's academic and pastoral achievements and the significantly improved standing in the community since the last inspection. They are particularly impressed by the very good relationships that permeate the school and the care and support given to all students and particularly those with special educational needs. Some parents are unhappy about the information they receive from the school, particularly reports, as they feel they lack detail on what their children need to do to improve. The inspection confirmed this view. Students' views are very positive. They feel that staff really care, want and enable them all to do well and that all are treated as equals and their views are heard and acted on.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- the assessment of students' work and the reports to parents should give more detailed information on what students need to know, do and understand in order to improve;
- the school, in conjunction with its many partners, needs to provide a wider range of vocational opportunities, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, in order to fully meet the needs of all students;
- the innovative approach to providing religious education, citizenship and personal, health and social education needs reviewing and closely monitoring to ensure adequate time is available and that all students receive their full entitlement;

and, in order to meet statutory requirements:

- the planned assessment and reporting arrangements for citizenship need implementing and monitoring and additional time is required for the delivery of religious education in the sixth form.

## SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is a growing, cost effective, **good** and developing feature of the school. Examination results overall are **in line** with national averages and this represents **good achievement**. Despite a dip in examination passes in 2004, the overall achievement in the sixth form is **good** and in 2002 and 2003 virtually all students gained their predicated grades. Overall, teaching is **very good**. The leadership of the sixth form is **very good**, students feel well supported by subject teachers and the pastoral staff. The sixth form is **very well** managed. Improvement since the previous inspection is **good**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership of the sixth form is very good and makes very good use of the new sixth form centre to create a sense of shared identity between staff and students.
- The support and guidance provided is good and this ensures that students feel their views are respected and they are treated as individuals.
- Achievement is good given the overall ability levels of the students when they join the sixth form.
- Overall teaching in the sixth form is very good.
- The proportion of students who passed A-levels fell in 2004; however, there is a good action plan in place to raise overall standards across the sixth form.
- Overall, the curriculum on offer at the school is not suitable for those who have not achieved good GCSE grades.

### 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 is <b>good</b> . Standards in the 2002 A-level and AS examinations were below average but improved in 2003 and were around the national average. Boys achieved better than girls in the 2004 examinations. Students achieve well because teaching is very good, stimulating, well organised and challenging. Leadership and management are excellent.
Mathematics	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . A-level results in 2003 and 2004 were below the national average. AS results were well above the national average. Standards and achievement seen during the inspection are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and is well planned but provides limited opportunities for independent learning. The new head of mathematics is providing good leadership. Management is now satisfactory, although there has been insufficient monitoring of students' progress.
Science - Physics	Provision is <b>good</b> . In 2003 and 2004, A-level results were below average, although above in 2002. In 2003, AS results were above average although a high proportion failed to achieve a grade because of weaker prior attainment at GCSE. The standard of students' work seen during the inspection is above average. Overall teaching is good, lessons are brisk, well planned and use technology well. Leadership and management are good.
Geography	Provision is <b>very good</b> . Standards in examinations are improving as in 2003 they were well below national averages. They were below in A-level in 2004 but at AS level standards were above national averages. Standards seen are well above average and students' achievement is very good. Teaching and learning are very good as students are actively engaged in learning. Leadership and management are very good.
Information Technology	Provision is <b>good</b> . Standards at A-level in 2003 were average and higher than in the previous year. Standards of work seen are good and students are achieving very well. Teaching is very good as teachers know their students well and have high expectations. Leadership and management are very good and have resulted in the successful implementation of the AVCE course.
Music and Music technology	Provision is <b>excellent</b> . The AS and A2 music results in 2003 were above



average. Whilst the A2 results in 2004 were again above average the AS results fell below average as courses are very inclusive and open to students of all abilities. Standards seen are broadly average and achievement is very good. Teaching is very good, challenging and well planned. The quality of leadership is first rate.

---

*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**

Good advice, guidance and support are provided for all sixth form students. They are given clear guidance about expectations for work, behaviour and attendance as they start life in the sixth form centre. They feel that the head of sixth form listens very well to their views and concerns and supports them very well when they are experiencing difficulties. Students also support each other very well while recognising the need to grow in independence and to develop individual research skills. They say that older students are often a great help to them when they are thinking about university applications. Students are given good quality advice and guidance. Their progress is carefully monitored within subjects and courses. The very strong partnership between home and school continues into the sixth form and provides additional support as students work towards their final exams. Good guidance is given on higher education, training and work opportunities and students are counselled well on their future aspirations. However, the open policy has led to some students finding difficulty in keeping up with the expectations of AS and A-level courses.

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

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Housed in new, purpose built accommodation the sixth form is developing its own identity within the school, though the qualities of care and concern for others are still strongly in evidence. The head of the sixth form, along with tutors, has generated a strong sense of community. There are good plans in hand to develop the sixth form further and ensure standards are maintained and improved. A very good collaborative venture with a neighbouring high school provides a greater variety of study opportunities at A-level. There are, however, insufficient courses available at the school for students who have not reached the higher grades at GCSE or who have achieved well in the alternative courses on offer in the main school. Plans are in hand to provide more formal partnerships between the school and other provider so that all students who wish to remain at the school can be better served.

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

Students feel that they have access to a wide range of courses, are suitably challenged and well supported by staff and have very good relationships with their tutors and feel that their views are taken into consideration. Students feel well advised when making choices about joining this or other sixth forms and about future careers or higher education. Students coming to the sixth form from other schools report a warm and friendly welcome, which helps them to settle in very quickly. Students have reservations about the growing use of the sixth form centre by students from the main school and some feel that the aspirational targets set for them are not fully explained to their parents. Despite these few reservations all are proud of their school and its sixth form provision.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall, standards of achievement are **good**. Standards of work seen are **very good** in Years 7 to 9 and **good** in Years 10 and 11.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, achievement is good. It is often very good and occasionally excellent in lessons.
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above national averages and had improved significantly on the good 2003 results.
- The mathematics results were outstanding in the 2004 Year 9 tests.
- GCSE results have been consistently above average overall following the significant improvement made in GCSE results following the last inspection.
- Not all students achieved their predicted A-level grades in 2004.

#### Commentary

##### Main school

1. When students join the school their standards of attainment are just above average. However, the profile of attainment on entry covers the full ability range and there is a small but significant proportion of students with below average ability and very few with well above average ability.

##### Key Stage 3 Years 7 - 9

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.0 (34.9)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	38.6 (36.1)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	35.8 (33.4)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 141 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Overall, achievement is very good. Students achieve standards that are well above average by the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science. In 2003, students in English did better than students with similar standards at the start of Year 7, but in mathematics and science did less well. This position was significantly improved in 2004. Results over time have been improving at a faster rate than is seen nationally. Teachers' assessments in the majority of other subjects are above or well above average and standards seen during the inspection confirm these assessments.
3. Boys did better than girls in the English, mathematics and science tests. During the inspection, although there were some variations between subjects, particularly in science, overall there was little variation between the performance of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs make very good progress. Overall, higher ability students achieved very well in the 2004 tests and this shows significant improvement on the 2003 figures.

## KEY STAGE 4- YEARS 10 AND 11

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	64 (60)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (94.)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96 (96.)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	38.5 (38.7)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 146 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- Overall, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. GCSE results in 2003 were above national averages and were well above average compared with schools with similar social intakes and schools with similar levels of attainment at the end of Year 9. Overall, this high level of performance has been maintained, in the as yet unvalidated results, in the 2004 GCSE examinations. Results over time have been improving at a faster rate than is seen nationally. The work seen during the inspection shows that the school is making good progress with its intended aim to achieve 70 per cent five A\*-C grades. Standards of work seen were above average or well above average in all subjects apart from art where they were judged to be excellent and in business education where standards seen were below average.
- Overall, boys and girls achieve equally as well. Gifted and talented students achieve well but the school does not achieve many A\* grades, in part a reflection of the attainment on entry profile of students. Students with special educational needs make very good progress. In all years all students' literacy, numeracy and information technology skills are well developed and students use these skills well, although there are insufficient opportunities to use the skills in English and mathematics. The very small number of students with English as an additional language make very good progress in their language development and their achievement is at least good.

### Sixth form

Overall, standards in post-16 examinations have been **above average** in 2001 and 2002 and **in line** in 2003 examinations and students have achieved **well** overall. The examination pass rate has been very high but fell to **below average** in the as yet unvalidated results in the 2004 examinations.

### Commentary

- The attainment on entry to the sixth form is average overall as there are very few students with significant numbers of very high grades at GCSE. In 2002 and 2003 virtually all students passed their examinations, achieving in the main in line with expectations given their prior attainment at GCSE. This represents good achievement overall given that students meet courses and subject content which are challenging and, in some subjects, entirely new to them. In 2003 female students achieved results above the national average and male students in line, although in 2002 both were above national averages. The few students in the sixth form with special educational needs are very well integrated and achieve well.
- In 2004 the pass rate fell to 80 per cent. This was due to a number of organisational factors, the destabilising effect of the late move into the new sixth form centre, some staffing and new course requirement difficulties and an open policy as the sixth form grew which led to a number of students starting courses that they found too challenging. The school has taken fast action to remedy the situation and overall standards of work seen during the inspection were at least satisfactory and the overall achievement of students was judged to be good. In the subjects inspected in depth, standards seen were average in English, mathematics and music and above average in physics and information technology and well above average in

geography. Achievement was satisfactory in mathematics but good in physics, information technology and English and very good in geography and music.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Their personal development through the provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is **very good**. Attendance in the main school and in the sixth form is **very good**. Punctuality is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students are very positive about every aspect of school life.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good.
- Students' relationships with one another and with adults are outstanding features of the school.
- Students' personal development is greatly enhanced by the wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them.
- Students like and engage with all that the school has to offer.

### **Commentary**

8. Students' attitudes to school are very good. They want to learn and work with enthusiasm and interest. There is excellent participation from students of all ages in the very wide range of activities provided during and outside the school day. Students like the school very much and praise the extensive experiences offered to them both in the classroom and in the extra-curricular activities on offer. Students particularly mention the performing arts, sports and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme as highlights of their lives at school.
  
9. Students' behaviour is very good because they respect and understand the school's expectations of them. They are attentive in class and mature and responsible around the school. Very few students have encountered any bullying or anti-social behaviour but know that the school is quick to act if there are any incidents. Students get on extremely well with each other and there is a happy and friendly atmosphere throughout the school. There are excellent relationships between students and adults and a feeling of mutual trust and respect. Students are relaxed and confident because they know that staff trust them to act sensibly, for example, when using the learning resource centre outside lesson time.
  
10. Students' personal development is very good. They enjoy taking responsibility and appreciate the opportunity to have a say in the running of the school through their year and school councils. Their understanding of moral and social values is very good and demonstrated by their mature behaviour and relationships with others. Their cultural development is very well promoted throughout the curriculum and they have good knowledge of cultures other than their own. Participation in the performing arts and sports make a strong contribution to students' personal development. Their social, moral and cultural development is very well promoted through all aspects of practice and performance and helps them to develop a deeper awareness of others which enhances their spiritual development. This is much improved since the last inspection. Assemblies contribute well to students' personal development. Students are able to reflect on the thought for the day in morning tutor time, although there is some variation in the quality of opportunities offered to them to do this between different tutor groups.

### **Attendance**

#### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003 (%)***

Authorised absence	
School data:	6.9
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.3
National data:	1.1

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

11. Students' attendance is very good. Punctuality is good, although a few are slow to arrive in the morning. Attendance is consistently above the national average and there is very little unauthorised absence due to the school's very good recording and monitoring systems. The educational welfare officer supports the school very well when any students' attendance is giving cause for concern.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of students*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	861	4	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	6	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

*There were 4 students in total on fixed term exclusions.*

12. The effectiveness of in-school support systems is evidenced in the very low levels of exclusion for a school of this size.

## Sixth form

13. Students have very positive attitudes to their studies. Attendance is very good and is monitored well. Punctuality is good, although there are some stragglers each morning. Most sixth form students enjoy life in Years 12 and 13 and are aware of the good opportunities that the school provides for them to achieve well, both as learners and as people. They think well of the school and speak with pride of the vast range of activities available to them. They are particularly positive about their new sixth form centre which they say gives them a sense of maturity and independence.
14. All students are actively involved in their lessons and in the extra-curricular and enrichment programmes. Some volunteer to help younger students as reading partners, help with clubs and take part in charity fundraising. Students are widely involved in performances and sports events and set good role models for those who are younger. They feel that they are treated with respect by adults and other students and appreciate the sociable atmosphere that exists amongst sixth form students.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

**The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching is very good** because the school has made very good use of national and local strategies and initiatives to improve teaching and learning. The curriculum is **good** and there is an **excellent** range of well attended extra-curricular activities. The school provides **very good** care, guidance and support and students feel very well cared for and safe at school. There are **very good** links with parents. Links with other schools and colleges and with the community are **excellent**.

## Teaching and learning

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good working relationships exist between teachers and students.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, they anticipate questions and they offer alternative strategies for solving problems.
- Students respond positively to this very good teaching and effective learning takes place.
- The teaching of students with special education needs is very good and these students make very good progress.
- Alternative strategies to meet the needs of the most able students have not been fully developed in all subject areas.
- There are occasions where opportunities for students to learn independently are missed and lessons are teacher dominated.
- Target setting arrangements and marking are not always used effectively.

### Commentary

#### Main school

15. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is very good overall and excellent in art and design. Students respond positively to this very good teaching and effective learning takes place. The school's commitment to the implementation of the National Strategy for students in these year groups is having a very positive impact and there are no subject areas in which teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are at least good across all subject areas in Years 10 and 11, apart from business studies where it is satisfactory. It is particularly effective in English, mathematics, geography, religious education and art. A key feature of the very good teaching is the very good subject expertise of the teachers, as a result of which students are confident that any subject difficulties they have can be resolved by talking with their teachers.
16. Working relationships between teachers and students are very good and create a positive classroom atmosphere in which effective learning can take place. Teachers know their students well and continually encourage and praise them so that they have the confidence to answer questions and contribute to group discussions. In the best lessons students are challenged to develop and test hypotheses. They experience a very wide range of learning activities and are given opportunities to explore and extend their understanding by sharing experiences with each other.
17. Teaching and learning are very good in those classes consisting mainly of students with special education needs. Teachers of this group are very aware of the needs of each student and plan their lessons accordingly. A wide range of learning styles and experiences ensure that lessons engage students throughout. Support staff make a considerable contribution to students' learning and work closely with teachers before and during lessons. In a few less successful lessons teaching does not make full provision for the wide range of ability within the class. The same tasks are set for all students and do not present sufficient challenge for the more able students to apply and extend their knowledge and skills. On a few occasions, learning is restricted because teachers talk at the students too much and do not give them sufficient opportunity to become involved in the lessons.
18. Procedures for assessing students' progress and attainment are good. There are clear guidelines issued to departments in the form of a well-structured assessment policy and there is regular tracking of student assessment as students progress through the school. Challenging target-setting has been established which benchmarks students against the top 25 per cent of schools nationally. The use and understanding of the process varies within and across departments so that students are working towards targets they have already exceeded or they are unable to achieve because of the limited grades available through the examinations. There are some examples of excellent practice, for example in English where

assessment criteria are shared with students and used by them to assess progress towards targets. The quality of marking of students' work is generally good and, in many areas, very good. In the best practice students receive good, constructive subject specific advice that enables them to improve future performance. The quality of marking, however, lacks consistency within and between departments and while marking for accuracy is done well students are not always given advice on what they need to do, know or understand in order to improve. The challenge for the school is now to raise the standard of marking in all departments to that of the very best. Overall, the quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.

### The sixth form

19. Overall the quality of teaching is very good. It is very good in English, ICT, geography and music, good in physics and satisfactory in mathematics. Overall, students make good progress and achieve well given their prior experiences and achievements. Where teaching is excellent, students are highly motivated by the level of challenge set, the teacher's enthusiasm and the pace of the lessons. The very good working relationships between teachers and students lead to a strong and supportive work ethos that facilitates good learning. The demands of syllabus completion and a perception in some cases that learning has to be teacher-directed does result in some missed opportunities for students to engage in individual or group activities that would enhance understanding.
20. Departments have clear guidelines for assessing students' progress. Ambitious targets are set, although the quality of monitoring students' progress towards these targets varies across departments. Some students and parents do not fully understand the relationship and purpose of the initial target set and the final expected grade which may sometimes be lower. In most subjects marking is thorough and in some it is diagnostic so that students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. In mathematics there is an over-reliance on students marking their own work and a corresponding lack of written feedback.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 140 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
12 (9%)	51 (36%)	45 (32%)	27 (19%)	5 (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*

### The curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum. There is an **excellent** range of opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are both **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good enhanced curriculum through the performing arts status of the school and an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities for all students.
- There is innovative development and review of the curriculum by the managers of the school, including the planning of ICT provision across the curriculum to support teaching and learning.
- Very good partnerships have been established with other educational institutions to provide more learning opportunities for students in Years 12 and 13.
- There is very good provision for students with special educational needs.
- There is a limited range of vocational courses and other activities on offer in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form to provide more opportunities and choice for students.
- There is insufficient time available to cover the wide range of personal, health and social education and citizenship adequately.

## Commentary

21. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good with enhanced provision for drama and dance. The curriculum is inclusive for all students, including those with learning difficulties and the gifted and talented. In Years 10 and 11 the school provides three routes of study that effectively offer good opportunities for all students. The majority of students follow a traditional academic programme of subjects. A vocational route of study provides courses in GNVQ performing arts, GNVQ ICT, business education and applied science. However, there is only a limited interest in these vocationally based courses and this reduces the overall effectiveness of the good curriculum provision. The school has not yet sufficiently informed parents and students of the relevance, importance and value of these courses. A third route of study involves a work-related learning programme, which includes the Sefton local education authority Impact programme. This is a well-established work placement programme and is very highly motivating for students. Currently, only a few students select for this route of study.
22. The school is meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, including the provision for religious education. There are adequate arrangements for a daily act of collective worship in assemblies and during tutorial time. There is very good provision for students with special educational needs across the main school and sixth form, through a good combination of in-class support and withdrawal to meet the needs of individual students. There is excellent support for learning outside the school day, for example the Early Birds club, lunchtime social development workshops and a homework club after school. Gifted and talented students are identified and there is good extension work provided in many, but not all, lessons and through the extensive opportunities provided by extra-curricular activities.
23. Across all the year groups the school has established a religious and values education programme (RAVE). This is a co-ordinated programme bringing together personal, social and health education (PSHE), a citizenship experience (ACE), religious education, tutorial time, the year assembly, thought for the day and collective worship. Although, overall, this is a good quality programme and is well planned, there is insufficient time available to cover the wide range of activities adequately during tutorial sessions. The monitoring of the outcomes, coverage and teaching quality of the RAVE programme is not sufficiently rigorous.
24. Students benefit from an excellent range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities heavily influenced by the Performing Arts status of the school. There are an extensive number of activities for students to take part in within the school, locally and in different parts of the country and even abroad. There is also good support for learning outside the school day through a well-established extra-curricular study programme for revision, including after-school homework provision. The school acts on suggestions made by students for additional extra-curricular activities.
25. There is innovative development of the curriculum by the managers of the school. This includes the link established with Creative Partnerships, the development of teaching and learning strategies, the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy in curriculum planning and the extensive provision for ICT across the school. The planning of the curriculum is reviewed and developed through a curriculum working party and monitored well by the governors of the school. Governors are also linked to subject departments and take this role seriously, providing further opportunities to monitor curriculum delivery. The school's provision for careers and work-related learning is covered in a separate section of this report.
26. The school has a good team of specialist teachers to deliver the planned curriculum. The teachers and ancillary staff are well qualified and experienced. The teaching assistants for students with special educational needs are deployed well. They provide good support for students in the classroom and guidance for teachers. Overall, the accommodation of the school is good and has significantly improved in the last five years. The school has a large sports hall and gym but no assembly hall so there is only one full assembly per week for each year group. The school holds two effective whole school assemblies at Christmas and summer at which the whole school comes together to celebrate its wide achievements. There are extensive grounds for sport together with new tennis courts but there is limited playground



space. The sports field needs to be upgraded to address health and safety issues. The school is well resourced to meet the needs of the curriculum with a good range of materials and teaching aids, including interactive white boards. There is very good provision for the use of ICT across the school to meet the teaching and learning needs of the curriculum.

## Sixth Form

27. There is a good and wide range of courses on offer in Years 12 and 13. Apart from some GCSE re-sit opportunities in Year 12 the courses are at advanced level and the school has recently introduced a number of Advanced Vocational courses to supplement the more traditional curriculum. To extend and make more cost effective advanced courses, the school has established a very good partnership with a neighbouring school and small numbers of students from both institutions make good use of this additional provision. While the curriculum provision is of good quality, it does not fully meet the needs of students who have achieved well but not at the higher levels of GCSE and some of these students are obliged to find alternative provision or take courses in which they do not eventually succeed. The school has good plans in place to establish more formal partnerships with local providers in order to serve better these students' pastoral and academic needs.
28. Sixth form students contribute to and benefit from the wide range of extra curricular activities; for example, a large number are actively involved in performing arts programmes and in the prestigious and demanding Duke of Edinburgh Gold award. While there are some very good individual and collective enrichment opportunities, the citizenship programme and the general religious education course are not fully developed. The recently built sixth form centre provides a very good focal point for the growing sixth form and provides very good additional computer facilities and teaching accommodation.

## Care, guidance and support

Overall, provision is **very good**. The provision to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. They are provided with **good** support, advice and guidance. The involvement of students of all ages through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are cared for very well through the established pastoral system.
- Students have excellent and trusting relationships with staff.
- Support for students with special educational needs is very good.
- Students do not always know what they need to do next to improve their work.
- The transition and induction arrangements for students who are new to the school in Year 7 are excellent.

## Commentary

29. The care provided for all students is very much appreciated by parents who say that their children always have someone to turn to and that this makes them feel very secure. The pastoral support team are led and managed very well. Heads of year, assistants and tutors know the students very well and provide very good continuity of care and support for them as they move through the school. There is good awareness of child protection procedures and those relating to children in public care. The school is very well supported by the educational welfare officer when it has concerns about individual students. Arrangements for health and safety are good. This very good care and support means that students are happy, confident and ready to learn.
30. Students say that they feel very well supported by adults in the school. They are confident that their concerns are listened to, either individually or through the school council. They know that their suggestions are taken seriously and are proud of their achievement in, for example, helping the school to improve its catering arrangements. All pastoral support staff, including the school nurse, work very well together as a team and have the best interests of the

students at heart. The learning mentor, for example, works with vulnerable students who are at risk of under-achievement. The quality of support and the care shown towards students with personal difficulties means that they achieve as well as others. On the whole, students feel that tutors are helpful, although the quality of support given in the short form time periods is inconsistent. Students generally feel that their heads of year are the most helpful to them when they have academic or personal worries.

31. The school has very effective systems for annual reviews to which all parents of students with Statements of Special Educational Needs are invited. The annual reviews and the open day are well attended by parents. There are very good links with specialist outside agencies who provide advice and resources for individual students. This advice is used well by special educational needs staff. This has resulted in more confident students who feel far more secure about their educational progress.
32. Overall, students receive good advice and guidance as they move through the school. They receive good help when making choices about subjects at the end of Year 9. Careers education and guidance are also good. Most students feel that teachers help them to understand how to improve their work and that the quality of individual guidance is good. In some subjects, students are given clear indications, for example through marking, on what they need to do to achieve the next level or a higher grade. However, there is some inconsistency between subjects and between different teachers and, overall, assessment is not always as effective as it might be in helping students understand what they need to know, understand and do to improve.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**Students who are new to the school in Year 7 settle into school life very quickly because they already know the school and its activities and can't wait to come.**

Excellent liaison procedures, established induction processes and strong links with primary schools are a key factor in this. The transition co-ordinator has developed excellent relationships with primary staff so that there is a clear dialogue about students' abilities and needs well before they make the move to Year 7. A great deal of work is done to ensure that tutor groupings are balanced, that students are with their friends and that those with special educational needs are supported from their first day. There is very little change necessary in these groupings once the students start school because of the care taken beforehand. However, it is also the school's innovative work in providing students in their primary schools with exciting opportunities in the performing arts, sports and Spanish which capture their enthusiasm and generate a real sense of excitement at coming to Formby High School. Year 7 students, in spite of a very short time at the school, already have a real sense of belonging and a genuine enthusiasm at the start of their secondary education.

#### **Sixth form**

33. Overall, good guidance and support is provided for all sixth form students. They are given clear guidance about expectations for work, behaviour and attendance as they start life in the sixth form centre. They feel that the head of sixth form listens very well to their views and concerns and supports them very well when they are experiencing difficulties. Students also support each other very well while recognising the need to grow in independence and to develop individual research skills. They say that older students are often a great help to them when they are thinking about university applications.
34. Students are given good quality advice and guidance. Their progress is carefully monitored within subjects and courses. Staff are vigilant where students appear to be falling behind with their coursework and instigate discussions with the students, parents and carers. The very strong partnership between home and school continues into the sixth form and provides additional support as students work towards their final exams. Good guidance is given on higher education, training and work opportunities and students are counselled well on their future aspirations.

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

There are **very good** links with parents, who have very positive views of the school. Links with other schools and colleges and with the community are **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are very pleased with the school and all it provides for their children.
- Communication with parents is good overall, although the quality of written reports is not as good as it could be.
- The school has excellent and innovative partnerships with other schools and colleges and the community and is highly regarded by them.

### **Commentary**

35. Parents are very pleased with the progress that their children make as a result of good teaching and high expectations. They praise the way in which new students are helped to settle at school and feel that the school is very well led and managed. They are delighted with the impact that the school's provision for performing arts has on students' confidence and achievement and are very proud of the school's reputation in the local area.
36. Some parents, however, have mixed views about the quality of information provided. They feel that there is positive and easy communication with staff and that discussion about their children's progress, whether informal or at consultation meetings, is very constructive. However, some parents do not feel that written reports are as helpful as they could be. They are confused by the grading system, say that there is inconsistency in the quality of information between subjects and that they are not given enough guidance on how their children need to improve their work. The school recognises this as an area for improvement and is considering ways to improve the quality of its academic reporting so that parents and students are better informed. As a result of a questionnaire, it has also identified in its school improvement plan the need to more regularly seek the views of parents.
37. The school makes excellent use of its links and partnerships with other schools and colleges to enrich the curriculum for students, provide staff with very good opportunities to share and develop expertise and to raise the school's status. Links with primary schools are particularly strong and there are many excellent opportunities, through its outreach programme, for students and staff to work together. The performing arts and the school's status as a specialist Arts college play a central role in widening the school's links both locally, nationally and abroad and serve to enhance the school's very good reputation in the local area. Links are very strong with agencies available to support students with special educational needs. The school is highly active in seeking new and innovative ways of extending its work. Links with Creative Partnerships, local industry and commerce and with a neighbouring high school strengthen and enrich the curriculum for students of all ages. The school plays a very important role in the community. Its facilities are used extensively by local groups for adult education, music and drama throughout the year. These activities are viewed by students as a valuable addition to the high quality of education already provided for them during the school day.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**. Governance is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent headteacher sets clear goals for school improvement.
- Senior managers form a very effective team, making very good use of their complementary skills and expertise.
- The very good governance focuses the school's work on improvement.
- The very good management of key staff supports a calm, harmonious atmosphere in which students work well.
- Leadership and management in the provision for students with special educational needs is excellent.
- Financial management is excellent and helps the school to make the best use of its resources.
- Alternative provision for students who are not capable of taking advanced courses is not sufficient.

### Commentary

#### Main school

38. The headteacher shows a clear and unremitting drive for improvement, which permeates the whole school. The work of senior managers, governors and other key staff is dedicated to this end, which unifies and focuses the work of all. The school is innovative and was awarded specialist Performing Arts College status recently, working collaboratively with another high school in the same local authority. As a result of this and other links, such as Creative Partnerships, standards are rising steadily and the school is building a very good reputation in the local community. The school provides a caring and welcoming environment and is rated very highly by students and parents alike.
39. The senior management team is a close-knit group whose range of experience and expertise enables them to play a major part in improving standards and who provide very good leadership and management. Clearly delegated responsibility means the drive for improvement is passed on to middle managers who play an important role because of their very good leadership and management skills. Departmental success is analysed carefully and future development needs outlined. The school has very good plans in place to raise standards in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form and to address weaknesses identified in the curriculum. Teaching and learning are very well monitored. Very good staff development, supported well by local education authority curriculum personnel, has played a significant part in raising standards, in curriculum innovation and in the co-operative ventures in which the school is involved. Rigorous recruitment procedures ensure new appointments to the school are high quality and contribute to the rising standards.
40. Leadership of special educational needs is excellent. This represents a clear improvement on the findings at the last inspection and this leadership has ensured that the support for students with special educational needs is much more consistent across subjects. The special educational needs co-ordinator has brought the provision for special educational needs in line with national requirements. Individual education plans for students with special educational needs now provide clear, challenging but achievable targets against which their progress can be monitored. These are brought up to date regularly by discussions between the students and learning support assistants.
41. Roles within the special educational needs area are clear and the effectiveness of the work of learning support assistants is monitored well. A strong and dedicated team of assistants provides very good quality information to subject teachers, most of whom use this effectively to respond to individual needs and this response is particularly thorough in English, mathematics and design and technology.

42. Financial planning and management are excellent and have enabled the school to develop significantly since the last inspection. The school has worked hard to seek additional funding, for example, achieving Performing Arts status and being selected as one of the schools in the Creative Partnerships Merseyside initiative. These additional funds, along with the core budget, are used very well to raise standards and expand the wider experiences of the students. The governors and senior management, supported by the expert and very experienced bursar, ensure that financial resources are targeted at well-identified priorities. Principles of best value are followed very well and the school is well supported by the local education authority with good information so that they are able to compare their spending with similar schools and others in the authority. The school provides very good value for money.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,386,330	Balance from previous year	108,407
Total expenditure	3,381,000	Balance carried forward to the next	113,737
Expenditure per student	3,918		

43. Governance of the school is very good and governors take their roles and responsibilities seriously. They take great pride in the school and in its improving reputation in the local community and work very effectively with the headteacher, sharing his aspirations, celebrating success and challenging disappointing outcomes. The system of link governors attached to school departments shows potential though at the present time it is under-developed. The governing body is made up of individuals who have a broad range of experiences and expertise both in the public sector and the business community.

## Sixth form

44. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Housed in new, purpose-built accommodation the sixth form is developing its own identity within the school, though the qualities of care and concern for others are still strongly in evidence. Students coming to the sixth form from other schools report a warm and friendly welcome, which helps them to settle in very quickly. The head of the sixth form, along with tutors, has generated a strong sense of community.
45. There are good plans in hand to develop the sixth form further and ensure standards are maintained and improved. A very good collaborative venture with a neighbouring high school provides a wider variety of study opportunities at A-level. There are, however, insufficient courses available at the school for students who have not reached the higher grades at GCSE or who have achieved well in the alternative courses on offer in the main school. Plans are in hand to provide more formal partnerships between the school and other providers so that all students who wish to remain at the school can be better served. The school, in conjunction with the local education authority, has undertaken a detailed analysis of the expenditure and income of the sixth form and this indicated that the sixth form is cost effective. Both the main school and the sixth form incomes contribute to the balances rightly kept for further planned priorities.

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### Work-related learning

The effectiveness of the school's provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **satisfactory**, it meets statutory requirements.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Work Experience programme was awarded a Merseyside Quality Award (ROQA) in July 2003.
- There exists a very well co-ordinated and managed Careers programme in Years 7 to 11.
- There is a good service level agreement and working partnership with Connexions.
- The school has made good flexible provisions of two days per week for a small number of students.
- A descriptive rather than analytical audit has been carried out.
- The school's timetabled vocational programme is only for low ability students giving WRL a low status.

### Commentary

46. Students are generally reaching average standards in the vocational subjects offered by the school and they are generally motivated to learn about work. Those interviewed showed a satisfactory understanding of aspects of the workplace such as health and safety, local employment and changes happening in the world of work. There are five students who are on designated WRL programmes for one or two days a week. One of these, a male, had been on placement at a private nursery and demonstrated benefits well, such as increased maturity and increased motivation whilst in school. On a monthly basis he was helped to review his learning by his employer using the NVQ framework. This programme is of good quality and is targeted effectively at students who are less well motivated. However, the range of vocational courses available for all students is limited which gives the false impression that these courses are not relevant for the majority of students.
47. Arrangements for development and evaluation are satisfactory. The school's programme for WRL is being carefully planned in accordance with national guidance. An audit of subjects' contributions to WRL has been undertaken. In the audit all subject areas have identified curriculum activities that explore the way in which business enterprises operate but the audits have not evaluated the quality or impact of the provision. The school is now engaged in the production of an action plan to implement a comprehensive WRL programme to meet national requirements and to ensure that WRL is adequately monitored, evaluated and recorded as WRL learning outcomes are not reported fully in students' progress files.
48. The school's provision for work experience is very good. In July 2003 this work experience programme was approved by the Merseyside Recognition of Quality Award (ROQA). Students maintain a comprehensive work experience diary and reflect well upon the learning and satisfactorily record the benefits they have gained. Students display skills and attitudes that are valued in the workplace, such as reliability, trustworthiness and conscientiousness very well indeed. Teachers ensure that students are well prepared before a work placement, well monitored while they are there and well debriefed afterwards to maximise the value of the time spent out of class. This work experience matches well the needs and aspirations of the majority of students.
49. Students have good careers guidance, including individual interviews through the Connexions service. Those Year 11 students interviewed said they were happy with the support they were receiving. They are guided well both about progression to post-16 and about future careers. The teaching of careers education seen during the inspection was satisfactory or better, with teachers showing good knowledge and understanding of employers' requirements that enabled them to conduct question and answer sessions with confidence.

50. WRL is well led by the co-ordinator who is well supported by a member of the school's senior leadership team and works closely with the subject leader for careers education. The school is developing a policy and strategy for implementing WRL. There have been very good initiatives developed involving professional writers and comedians with partners such as Creative Partnerships Merseyside and involvement of the student council in re-negotiating the school's catering contract.

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

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average.
- Teaching is challenging and well planned and ensures all students achieve well.
- Students have very positive attitudes and work hard in lessons.
- Students with special needs are taught very well.
- Leadership is excellent and management of staff and students is very effective.
- Display work in classrooms is outstanding.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Very good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Excellent	
Management of the department	Excellent	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

#### Commentary

51. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 results in 2003 were well above the national average and in the previous two years they were above and well above average. At GCSE in 2003 results in English language and literature were above the national average, although literature results were not as strong as in some other subjects.
52. On entry to the school standards are above average, although there are variations from year to year. Standards in speaking and listening and reading are stronger than writing in Year 7. At the start of Year 9 students can talk confidently about the books they are reading and listen attentively. They read out loud with increasing confidence and competence. The quality of their writing improves significantly both in terms of its accuracy and the interest of its content. In Years 10 and 11 high attainers can read, evaluate and discuss well a range of increasingly sophisticated books and write imaginatively and accurately about a range of topics. Middle attainers develop good advanced reading skills and lower attainers improve well their reading and writing. Although girls achieve higher standards than the boys, this is less so than in most schools. Students with special educational needs make very good progress, as do the small number of students with English as an additional language. In Years 10 and 11 students are starting to make very good progress, especially high attainers and those with special educational needs.
53. Students are achieving very well. Teaching is never less than good and is often very good and sometimes excellent. In an excellent Year 9 lesson on *Macbeth* low attaining students responded well because there was a range of well-planned learning activities managed very well by the teacher and the teaching assistant. The pace of learning was brisk and students developed a good understanding of the plot and characters. Throughout the school boys and girls respond very well because they are expected to work hard and teachers have high



expectations for them. The National Strategy for Literacy is being used most effectively and is having an impact on raising standards. In a very good Year 11 lesson high attaining students discussed in an intelligent and mature way how they could raise their grades from an A to an A\*. The quality of teacher presentations and challenging questioning of students are strengths across the department. Teachers set a lot of work for their students and mark their work conscientiously with detailed comments on how to improve. Students across the school are well aware of what they need to improve and the grades they are capable of achieving. In a small number of lessons learning could be improved further if students were given more opportunities for individual work and to use ICT in lessons.

54. The head of department provides dynamic leadership and management. She has a very good understanding of what the priorities are for the department's development. The two new members of staff have been successfully introduced to a close-knit team. Schemes of work cater well for students of differing levels of attainment and the quality of learning resources is very good. Classrooms are alive with stimulating material and this is used well to support and celebrate students' learning so that display work in all classrooms is outstanding and the department organizes a wide range of quality extra-curricular activities. Professional writers are used very effectively to develop students' writing skills. There is good promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Unsatisfactory teaching has been eradicated and standards have improved significantly across the school, especially in Years 7 to 9. This is a department which has the capacity to improve even further.

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

55. Standards in literacy across the school are **good**. There is a good range of enrichment opportunities to develop literacy. Most subjects use word walls effectively and the student planner has a section of subject specific vocabulary which is referred to by teachers. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented very well and there is evidence of good practice throughout the school. In design and technology students have good opportunities for extended writing and in ICT and performing arts they develop good speaking and listening skills when they work in groups. The English department develops well students' skills in reading.

#### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Provision in French is **good**. Provision in Spanish is **good**.

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

- The subject leaders show drive for improvement and have a strong sense of direction.
- Improved teaching is significantly raising standards, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers have very good levels of subject knowledge and proficiency and plan thoroughly.
- Teachers ensure very good productive working relationships that promote very good attitudes.
- Students are not always aware of how they can improve and have insufficient opportunities to develop independent learning skills in order to further raise standards.

## Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	French very good, Spanish good	
Management of the department	French very good, Spanish good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

## Commentary

56. In 2003 GCSE results in French were above average for grades A\*-C and broadly in line with national expectations in Spanish. Girls attained better than boys. Students performed better in French than in many other subject areas in the school. Recent results' trends show that these standards are improving. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 were above average in French and slightly above average in Spanish. Achievement is therefore good given the standards of attainment at the end of Year 9. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average and recent trends show that these standards are improving. Standards of work seen were above average with Year 9 students confident in the use of past tense talking about their recent holiday activities. Girls' written work is better than that of boys, but boys' oral contribution to some lessons is better than that of girls. At the end of Year 9, achievement is good given the limited experience in these subjects students have when they enter the school in Year 7.
57. Teaching and learning are good. The substantial majority of teaching seen in Years 10 and 11 is good or better, with some very good teaching seen in both French and Spanish. Very good teaching is characterised by high yet realistic expectations of student performance. A wide range of activities engage students in their own learning, making them less reliant upon the teacher as sole stimulus. The significant majority of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good or better. This teaching was very well prepared and thought through with high levels of energy and enthusiasm evident, brisk pace, extensive and highly appropriate use of target language and outcome related learning objectives against which learning can be assessed. Opportunities for independent learning are developing, but the limited range of resources readily available sometimes limits teaching and learning strategies. The recent installation of a computerised language laboratory is already offering more opportunities for students to work independently. Assessment for learning is good and fast developing with students beginning to understand at what level they are and how to improve.
58. Curriculum leadership and management are good in Spanish and very good in French. Recently appointed subject leaders have high aspirations and expectations, setting very good role models for staff and students. There is excellent morale with good support systems in place in terms of daily management and continuous professional development, although subject leaders lack opportunities for the exchange of good and effective practice through peer observation and co-coaching. The raising of students' achievement is supported well by an increase in participation in foreign visits, extra-curricular activities and a flourishing pen-friends scheme. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Very good vision and clarity of leadership is provided by the head of department.
- Teachers are very secure and confident in their subject knowledge.
- Implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been highly effective.
- The assessment and marking of work does not always make clear what students need to do to improve.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to use information technology.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Very good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

### Commentary

59. In 2003 standards attained in national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average, although below the average for schools with similar prior attainment levels. Results for 2004 were exceptionally good and well above the previous year's published national averages for similar schools. Boys' attainment was better than that of the girls. Results have been consistently above the national average and the upward trend is above that seen nationally. In work seen during the inspection, students' attainment by the age of 14 is well above national expectations. Achievement is very good in all ability sets.
60. In 2003 the percentages of students obtaining a GCSE grade A\* to C and those obtaining grade A\* to G were both well above the national average. The performance of girls was better than that of the boys. In work seen during the inspection student attainment by the age of 16 is well above national expectations and achievement is good when prior attainment levels are taken into account.
61. Teaching is very good overall with many examples of very good or excellent practice. The great majority of students are motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers and willingly contribute to class discussion and questioning. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and students behave very well. Excellent use has been made of the National Numeracy Strategy in the drive to raise standards at all levels.
62. In the most successful lessons teachers are very aware of prior attainment levels and set work that is suited to the abilities of the students in the group. Students in the top ability sets achieve very well. Students with special educational needs make equally good progress as a result of their teachers' high expectations, good classroom management skills and effective use of learning assistants. Despite improvements since the last inspection, it remains the case that there are insufficient opportunities for students to use ICT to develop mathematical skills and so raise attainment. Students' prior attainment is used as a basis for planning work and its use as a tool for setting targets and monitoring progress is evident in most classes; further development is planned in order to include all teaching groups. The marking of students' work

is satisfactory, although there is insufficient use of written comments and diagnostic assessment that would help students to improve future performance. This has rightly been identified as an area for development along with maintaining acceptable standards of presentation.

63. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for improving standards. She is a very good role model for other teachers and has high expectations of all students. Considerable efforts have been made to create a good working environment and the quality of display in the classroom and on the corridor is very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

Use of mathematics across the curriculum is **good**.

64. Students are applying their numeracy skills well in most subject areas. In geography coursework, for example, students make good use of their mathematical skills as they analyse, represent and interpret data. In physical education, students measure heartbeats, draw graphs and interpret data. In art, students show an understanding of perspective and are able to work to scale. Within science all students are able to measure and weigh with accuracy whilst the more able students display skills in algebra as they form and solve equations.

### SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership is raising standards.
- Good teaching promotes good learning and good achievement.
- Some accommodation is in poor condition and hinders learning.
- Very good attitudes help students to learn well.
- Excellent links with primary schools aid continuity of students' work when they start secondary school.
- Teachers' marking gives insufficient help to students on how they can improve and sub-standard work is not corrected so gaps persist in students' knowledge.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

#### Commentary

65. Results of national tests for Year 9 students in 2003 were well above average compared to national and similar schools' averages, but very low compared to the average for students with similar prior attainment. Standards have improved steadily since 1999 at a faster rate than the national increase. Unvalidated results for 2004 show this improvement is maintained. Results in the GCSE separate sciences, biology, chemistry and physics, were above the national averages for those subjects in 2003, though the proportion of the very highest grades A\*-A

was lower. Results in the Dual Award science examinations in 2003 were below the national average but overall standards are above average. Unvalidated results for 2004 are similar to those for 2003.

66. Inspection findings are that the standard of students' work is above average by Year 9 and Year 11. Boys' results have been higher than those for girls for several years. Because of the very good work started in the primary schools, students settle in to their studies very quickly and make rapid progress. Students studying separate science subjects in Year 11 are well motivated and work to high standards. Students' achievement is good. They enter school with above average standards, make good progress to the end of Year 9, when they are above average and improve further to the end of Year 11. This is good achievement for the current Year 11 students because this group of students were close to average when they were in Year 9. Because behaviour and relationships are so good, teachers waste little time maintaining discipline so lessons are productive as a result.
67. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned. The best are brisk and include a variety of activities which maintain students' interest and make learning effective. Teachers give clear instructions so students work safely and carefully in experimental sessions. Well-structured lessons aid learning for all and those students with special educational needs progress at the same rate as their class because support staff and teachers give good quality support. Teachers are not sufficiently critical of sub-standard work with graphs and diagrams and their marking does not always explain what students need to do to improve their standards. In addition, missing work or errors are not subsequently corrected so gaps persist in students' knowledge.
68. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear drive to continue the improvement in standards. The curriculum is evolving well to provide for students at all levels of attainment. Much work has been done to assess students' performance and to inform parents about it regularly. Day-to-day organisation is very good and teachers and laboratory technicians are well deployed. Some accommodation is dismal and worn and provides a poor environment for study. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The provision of computer hardware and software is very good and continuing to improve.
- Students achieve well due to good teaching and effective leadership and management.
- Links with partner primary schools are very good and support student transfer well.
- Marking and teacher assessment is not used consistently to help students evaluate and improve their work.
- The use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is very good.
- There is a lack of differentiation in planning and teaching for the most able students.
- Technical support and network management are very good.

## Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

## Commentary

69. Standards in ICT at the beginning of Year 7 are above average particularly with word processing and presenting information, although less well developed in control and using spreadsheets. A clear progression is evident in students' work and achievement is good. As a result, standards in all strands of ICT at the end of Year 9 are above average. They were well above national standards in 2003 and showed further improvement in 2004.
70. At the end of Year 11, standards were very high in 2003 in comparison to schools nationally and standards were generally above those achieved by students in other subjects. The unconfirmed 2004 results are broadly in line with national standards and lower than those for 2003. However, results from the two years are not directly comparable as students took GCSE ICT in 2004 rather than GNVQ Part 1, which was taken by the 2003 year group. The majority of students achieve well in Years 10 and 11, although no A\* grades were achieved in 2004, suggesting a lack of challenge for the most able students. The general standard of written work is above average. Practical assignments are carefully presented and organised and well annotated to show the stages in their development. The very small number of ethnic minority students is well supported by staff. Overall, teaching is good throughout the school, although a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 8. Generally, lessons are well structured, energetically presented and challenging, without being over ambitious. Well produced computer driven presentations and paper resources are often used to support learning, and well managed, inclusive questioning is seen in some lessons.
71. Students generally make good progress with their practical assignments because they are well supported by good whole-class teaching and the individual help given by teachers during practical sessions. Students with special educational needs receive additional targeted support from teaching assistants in some lessons, but lessons are not always sufficiently well planned to help these individuals do well. Procedures for setting Year 9 and Year 11 targets and monitoring students' progress have improved markedly since the last inspection. The ICT co-ordinator has developed a very good tracking system, which enables the performance of students to be followed each year and underachievement to be identified and addressed. Marking and teacher assessment are satisfactory overall but standards vary in quality across the department and need to be made more consistent. At best, marking is linked to National Curriculum levels, written comments suggest improvements and next steps and students are given checklists with marking criteria to help them evaluate and improve their assignments.
72. The curriculum co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management. He has successfully implemented the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and has developed ICT as a core subject in Years 10 and 11, introducing both GCSE and full GNVQ courses to match the needs and interests of students. He has also developed strong links with partner primary schools and very good strategies now exist to ease student transfer and assure continuity of learning. Teaching staff show commitment and have good subject knowledge. However, some also have major teaching commitments in other areas and there is, consequently, a lack of formal opportunities for staff to meet and share good practice. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

Standards and use of ICT across the curriculum are **good** with some very good features.

73. The provision of computer hardware and software around the school has greatly improved since the last inspection. Many classrooms now have interactive whiteboards or beam projectors, which are being well used. In many departments, such as geography, mathematics, music and science, they enhanced whole class teaching and students' involvement in lessons. Word processing and internet research are used routinely across the school to improve the presentation of students' coursework and support learning. Some departments make very good use of specialist software and hardware. Music students for example, use a variety of software for composition and for sound recording and editing. In science, computers are used to log experimental data and present simulations of scientific theories such as radioactive decay. However, there are still insufficient opportunities for all students to use ICT to aid their learning in mathematics and English

## HUMANITIES

### History

Provision in history is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average as a result of good teaching.
- Very positive attitudes and hard work enable students to achieve well.
- Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 do not always show what students need to do to improve.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

#### Commentary

74. Standards by Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have indicated consistently that both boys' and girls' attainment has exceeded national expectations, though the results for 2003 were overestimated as very high. Similar standards are evident in the work of students currently in Year 9. GCSE results in 2003 were above average and those for 2004, as yet unconfirmed, are in line with those reported nationally. These results represent a temporary decline from standards which had been consistently well above average and may be attributed to a period of instability in staffing. Under the leadership of a newly appointed head of department, standards seen during the inspection in Year 11 are again well above average as a result of good teaching.
75. Students' attainment in history on entry to the school is above average, though a significant number have underdeveloped historical skills. The progress made by the end of Year 9

represents good achievement. The great majority of students display good factual knowledge and write and talk accurately and fluently about the causes and effects of historical events and changes. Most are secure with chronology and can use information from a range of sources to support arguments. In Years 10 and 11 students continue to achieve well in applying these skills to the demanding development and depth of studies for the GCSE course, in which they are faced by a totally new and unfamiliar body of work.

76. Teaching is good overall and frequently very good. Teachers' expert subject knowledge, particularly that of non-specialists, is impressive and is evident in probing and targeted questioning. Students' understanding is developed well as they are required to elaborate and extend their responses. Teachers' obvious enthusiasm is transmitted to students, who show real interest in the subject and work very hard. They behave very well and work co-operatively in pairs and groups. Lessons are well planned with a variety of interesting and challenging tasks, which allow students of all abilities to move progressively in small, manageable steps towards clearly defined objectives. Some lessons, however, are rather too teacher-led with insufficient opportunities for students to learn independently and marking in Years 7 to 9 does not always clearly indicate what students need to do to improve their work.
77. Leadership of the department is good as it demonstrates the vision and determination to maintain history as a strong and viable subject. Management is satisfactory because while procedures for monitoring and evaluating work of the department exists they are not yet sufficiently rigorous or formalised particularly in the use of data and the monitoring of teaching. Clear and relevant priorities for improvement have been identified, principally the implementation for 2004 of new assessment tasks and procedures for Years 7 to 9. Since the previous inspection, standards and achievement in Year 9 are higher, all teaching is at least good and issues over non-specialists and lesson-planning have been addressed.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is thorough and effective planning of resources for teaching and learning.
- Students achieve very well where teaching has clear objectives and in the very small number of lessons where this is not the case achievement is limited.
- Teachers and students use ICT very effectively.
- Good teamwork stems from clear leadership.
- There is good provision for students with special educational needs and the achievement of the highest attaining students is very good.
- Assessment is used well to respond to individual needs.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good
Quality of learning	Good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	



## Commentary

78. Teacher assessments show that standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above national averages. Standards at GCSE level in 2003 were well above national averages but broadly in line with results obtained in other subjects. Although standards at GCSE level in 2004 are lower than in 2003, they are still above national averages. Standards in lessons across the age range are above average overall but better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
79. Students achieve well in lessons in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11 because teachers plan thoroughly by structuring tasks carefully to enable students of all abilities to do as well as they can. Students with special educational needs achieve well because teachers work closely with teaching assistants to ensure that the resources provided work successfully and are improved if necessary. The achievement of gifted and talented students is very good. Extra tasks are provided in most lessons to ensure that these students can attain a higher level. Teachers have high expectations and lessons proceed at a good pace. Consequently, students enjoy the subject and are very positive about it.
80. Overall, teaching and learning are both very good, although in a small minority of lessons there is satisfactory and unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Where teaching is very effective, lessons are prepared using a wide variety of resources. Very good use is made of interactive whiteboards to present information and to provide useful material for discussion. This helps to engage students' interest. The assessment of students' work is thorough because it is carried out regularly and is carefully structured. Comments on students' work are constructive and, as a result, most students understand how they can improve. Teachers encourage students to discuss work in groups, for example marking pieces of coursework done by others. This helps to improve their understanding of their own levels and the levels that they are aiming for. They are willing to listen to others' points of view. However, in these very good lessons there is always part of a lesson where the pace changes appropriately and students become engrossed in their own written work. Where lesson objectives are not made clear and the review of previous learning is dealt with inadequately, students become uncertain of their task and there is a very limited understanding and progress.
81. Leadership is very good because teachers are encouraged to adapt lessons and to explore more suitable schemes of work in order to suit a wide variety of learning styles. Staff support each other well and jointly produce resources for learning and assessment. Management is very good because the department is self-evaluative, monitors performance data very well and makes changes where necessary. The leadership engenders very good staff-student relationships through extensive out of class support and fieldwork activities. This has already resulted in the popularity of the subject increasing at GCSE. The quality of the provision in geography has improved well since the last inspection.

## Religious education

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a high quality of teaching and wide variety of approaches used.
- Students develop a very good range of skills and a deep understanding of world faiths.
- The leadership and dedication of the head of department have ensured outstanding improvement since the last inspection.
- The students enjoy religious education and recognise its relevance to their lives.
- The schemes of work and marking policy require refinement in order to ensure they are consistently followed.

## Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Excellent	

## Commentary

82. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Short course GCSE results in 2003 were well above national expectations. In lessons seen and work analysed, overall achievement is very good. Teachers' very effective use of a wide variety of methods within well-planned and brisk lessons ensures that students can express their views confidently and sensitively within an inclusive ethos. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and highly developed skills.
83. Students with special educational needs achieve very well and the most able students are challenged and extended using accelerated learning approaches. Structured group-work and creative approaches enable the students to refine their oral and listening skills. Strong links with other departments and the stimulating use of ICT by the head of department enhance learning. In Year 7 thinking skills were introduced using an interactive whiteboard and effectively applied to a task about world religions. Homework is used well to extend and to reinforce learning. Students reflect on their learning and this self-evaluation is effective. In one Year 11 lesson, students were able to articulate their feelings and concerns about suffering and death. A Year 9 class explored the life of the Buddha and the idea of enlightenment in depth and demonstrated outstanding maturity of thought and analysis. Students' progress is tracked across the department and a sound marking policy is in place but inconsistently implemented. Very good links with primary schools are developing and religious education plays an important role in induction. The students enjoy religious education and have a respect for the rights and beliefs of others. Religious education work contributes significantly to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of students.
84. Outstanding improvement has been made since the last inspection, particularly in terms of the introduction of short course GCSE and A-level religious studies and the achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. The head of department leads the department very well. She has a clear vision for the future development of the department and is now supported by a very good team. The department is well managed. Resources are very good, although the religious education rooms are in need of improvement to facilitate the range of teaching methods and to enhance opportunities for reflection.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good through good lesson planning and feedback to students.
- Students achieve good standards at the end of Year 9.
- The work of the department is well monitored by the subject leader who has a clear ethos of high expectations in work and behaviour.
- Assessment is well established to monitor students' attainment and progress against National Curriculum levels across Years 7 to 9 and in GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11.
- There is a common approach to planning schemes of work for Years 7 to 9, ensuring continuity and progression in learning and teaching.
- Some of the accommodation is inadequate for teaching parts of the subject.
- There are insufficient facilities to use computer-aided design and manufacture within the department.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

#### Commentary

85. Teacher assessments show that standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 are well above national expectations. Inspection findings show that standards are above average and achievement is good. In all the design areas, students gain a good breadth of experience using a wide range of practical skills and materials. There is a good focus on producing quality products. GCSE results overall in 2003 are similar to national averages and this is good achievement for the students involved. Inspection findings are that standards are average and achievement is good. Folios are good and graphically well presented with many students making good use of ICT. Students have a good experience of existing products to extend their design thinking skills and to support the development of ideas.
86. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and sometimes very good. Where lessons are good or better they are planned well, expectations are high and there is good review of learning with students. Teachers have a good working relationship with students and this contributes to their good motivation, enjoyment and progress in lessons. Students with learning difficulties are supported well and also make good progress. Gifted and talented students are identified and there is good provision to meet their learning needs with extension activities.
87. The leadership and management of the department are good with a clear ethos of high expectations in work and behaviour. There is good teamwork throughout the department. Schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 are efficiently planned to ensure all students progress well with their learning. Cross-curricular themes, for example literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT are covered well in planning. Assessment practice is well established across Years 7 to 9 and

collated data is used effectively to monitor students' attainment and progress against National Curriculum targets. In Years 10 and 11, assessment is thorough and provides constructive information to students, including actions for improvement. The work of the department is monitored well by the head of department and development planning is good and focused on, improving provision and raising standards.

88. Workshop accommodation for design and technology is good. But the two rooms for the teaching of food technology are very dated and both are in need of refurbishment. The resources for teaching and learning are good but there are insufficient facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture for use within the department. Display is of a good standard and very effectively used as a resource for teaching through using examples of work produced by students to show high expectations of quality, content and presentation. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department has effectively addressed issues from the previous inspection and there is now a comprehensive development plan in place and good provision for students with learning difficulties.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

89. The school has secured specialist performing arts college status. It works in partnership with a local high school and primary schools to present a comprehensive programme of learning activities. The school provides experiences in drama, dance and music which are available to all students. Music was inspected in depth and the work of drama and dance sampled.

### Art and design

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are high. By the end of Year 11 they are very high.
- The department promotes consistently high standards of achievement.
- Very high applied subject expertise supports the excellent teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management are excellent and support the teachers' high level of expertise.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory, but used very well.
- The tutorial style of teaching promotes excellent attitudes.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Very high
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Very good	Excellent
Attitudes of students to their work	Excellent	Excellent
Quality of teaching	Excellent	Excellent
Quality of learning	Excellent	Excellent
Quality of curriculum leadership	Excellent	
Management of the department	Excellent	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

### Commentary

90. On entry to the school, students' standards in art and design are average. Students very quickly make progress and they achieve very well and by the end of Year 9 their standards are high. By Year 11 their achievement is excellent and they attain very high standards. Over many years GCSE examination results have been consistently high or very high and are now very high. Overall, standards have improved since the last inspection and the subject is one of the highest performing subjects in the school. Work in progress is very well supported by the

very good attention the teachers give to developing the students' technical skills and the command of the media they use. Very good attention is given to cultural aspects. The inclusion of all students is excellent. There are very good links with artists and visits into the community and across the world. These give the students very good opportunities to explore work related matters.

91. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now excellent overall. Excellent teaching is characterised by the very high level of subject expertise supported by very thorough planning and assessment matched to the students' individual needs. Challenge, expectation and the encouragement and engagement of students are excellent. The adoption of a tutorial style of teaching where students are taught in small groups or on a one-to-one basis very effectively supports high achievement and promotes excellent attitudes to the subject. Assessment is very good. Targets are shared with students and they are very clear as to what to do next to improve. Homework is very well set and its completion is tracked.
92. The excellent leadership and management by the subject leader and the excellent teamwork and collaboration between the two teachers allow them to fully utilise their high level and range of qualifications. Their expertise and qualifications impact very well on the very wide range of the students' work and extra-curricular activities. Overall, the accommodation is unsatisfactory. It is cramped and there is insufficient storage space. The two available rooms have to be used for the very wide range of two- and three-dimensional work in progress. The teachers make very good use of the existing accommodation and very effectively celebrate the very high standards of the students' work with exciting two-dimensional and three-dimensional displays in the designated art rooms and around the school. Resources are good and good use is made of a wide range of ICT resources. Students effectively use their literacy and numeracy skills. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

### **Dance**

93. Standards in dance in Years 10 and 11 are very high with all students achieving very well. Teaching and learning are very good. The specialist teachers have excellent subject knowledge which they use enthusiastically and creatively in lessons. Relationships with students are mature and productive leading to highly focused and challenging lessons where very good progress is made. Students work co-operatively with each other and create new motifs using rhythms such as jazz and composing sequences using Laban notation. The leadership and management of dance are very good. Extra-curricular dance is excellent, where a weekly master class for talented students is held. Groups work hard to create performances for the school and community and an ambitious group is preparing to take their performance on a tour of China.

### **Drama**

94. During the inspection three drama lessons were sampled. In the lesson observed in Year 9, standards were below average. GCSE results are above the national average. Although teaching is good overall, there are variations in its quality. When teaching is focused with clear learning objectives and a wide range of learning activities, achievement is good and students enjoy their lessons. In Year 11, students can confidently interpret texts, develop good skills in speaking and listening and can evaluate their own work and that of fellow students very well. Students explore important issues such as unwanted pregnancies with considerable maturity and sensitivity. The department is managed well by an enthusiastic teacher and there are good schemes of work. The quality of extra curricular work is very good and all staff are generous in the time they give to these activities. The department has the facilities and expertise to improve further and ensure high quality teaching and learning across the school.

## Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very high standard of teaching encourages students to learn really well.
- The very good curriculum and the excellent range of extra-curricular activities provides students with an exciting range of musical opportunities.
- Standards in GCSE are well above average but there are no A\* grades.
- Because lessons are well-planned relationships are first rate.
- The excellent range of accommodation and resources enhances the work of the department.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Excellent	Excellent
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Excellent	
Management of the department	Excellent	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

### Commentary

95. The 2003 and 2004 teacher assessments for students aged 14 were well-above average, as were the GCSE results for those aged 16. All students gained higher grades but no A\* grades were achieved and this is a departmental target for the future. There is no significant difference between the work of boys and girls. At the end of Years 9 and 11 the standards seen are well above average. Many students enter Year 7 with well-developed musical skills and the very good teaching develops these skills very well so that there is very good achievement throughout both key stages. The large range of workshops, performances, foreign visits and world music events attract many students and encourage participation. Students of all abilities achieve very well and talented students play a leading part in these activities. The vibrant musical life of the school contributes well towards the personal development of all students.
96. The teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good overall and teachers inspire students to do their best. Assessment is good and students' self-assessment reinforces how well they are progressing. Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 ensures that all students achieve very well. Because of the emphasis on a wide range of musical experiences, students have a secure background that raises their standard of learning. Performing arts college funding has been used very well to provide excellent accommodation and resources, including a professional quality technology suite and students make very good use of these facilities to extend their learning and achievements.
97. The leadership is outstanding and there is a clear vision of where the department is going. The head of department has many good ideas that drive the subject forward. The very strong links with the local education authority music service and the local training college have a very beneficial effect on the development of music. Departmental management is very strong and ensures that teachers and trainee teachers are well-supported. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Attitudes of students to their work are very good.
- Relationships between staff and students are supportive and encouraging.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- Standards are above those nationally.
- The head of department leads by example and sets high standards.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

### Commentary

98. Standards are well above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11 in physical education. Standards at GCSE are above those found nationally. Overall achievement of students is very good throughout the school. Students with special educational needs make very good progress because of the use of student or teacher demonstration to make instructions clear. More able students are given additional work to ensure they perform to the best of their ability during lessons and in out of school activities. Overall, all groups of students achieve very well because they are challenged and motivated during lessons.
99. Teaching and learning are very good overall and are very good in some sports. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which is enthusiastically communicated during lessons. Relationships between staff and students are very good. This leads to a very good working atmosphere in lessons where the constant use of praise and encouragement ensures that all students are challenged to work to the best of their ability. Overall, learning is very good because students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own progress by leading and planning activities and evaluating their own performance.
100. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The department is well resourced and has clean and attractive accommodation. The new head of department has high aspirations and a vision for the future of physical education in the school. He motivates by example and has identified staff strength and areas for development and linked them to a staff development programme. Management is supportive and is focused on maintaining and improving the already high standards in the department. Extra-curricular sport and activities are a significant strength of the department. The school has achieved considerable success both with individual students and teams. The department has achieved the Sportsmark Award and is working well towards achieving Sportsmark Gold. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

## Business Education

Provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although standards are well below average, students' achievement is satisfactory and in line with their prior attainment.
- Accreditation is inappropriate in that it does not recognise or reward students' achievement adequately.
- Teachers have ensured that good mutually respectful relationships are maintained.
- Some students in Year 11 are not engaged and their attitudes to learning are unsatisfactory.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Judgement	Years 10/11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Below average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Y10Satisfactory Y11Unsatisfactory
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Quality of curriculum leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management of the department	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	n/a

### Commentary

101. In 2004 in GCSE at grades A\*-G there was a 100 per cent pass rate, although the number of students achieving grades A\*-C was well below average. However, these students performed as well in this subject as in other GCSEs for which they were entered. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were below average. However, given the attainment levels of these students in core subjects, their achievement is satisfactory.
102. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are just satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and competence and establish good rapport with students, which supports good constructive working relationships at times. Attainment is hindered by some Year 11 students' lack of commitment to coursework completion to the highest standards. Students' attitudes to learning in Year 11 are a major factor for unsatisfactory improvement in their achievement, as are the dominant demands of boys within the group. Teachers' lower expectations and the slow pace in lessons do not always ensure active student engagement in learning. There is limited use of assessment to inform students of targets and next steps to improvement so that students do not always fully understand how they can improve. Work in Year 10 presents a better picture as students are more responsive to the teaching they receive so that overall learning and achievement are satisfactory.
103. Curriculum leadership is unsatisfactory but management is satisfactory. The subject leader bears responsibility for GNVQ co-ordination and key skills co-ordination as well as leadership of the business education area. His leadership in Years 10 and 11 is not satisfactory. Although there is clarity of vision of business education as a valuable course for all students, there is little clarity about how performance might be improved for those who currently opt for the course. Data is monitored and patterns reviewed but insufficient action has been taken to consider the more vocational alternatives to the GCSE course to improve the provision to meet these students' needs. The current accreditation for Year 10 and Year 11 courses is unsatisfactory as it does not optimise student achievement. The subject leader is knowledgeable and provides a good role model to students and staff through his prevailing good humour, patience and empathy. Business education was not inspected in the previous inspection.



## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the co-ordinator is very good.
- There is an impressive programme to teach Religious and Values Education (RAVE).
- The students' attitudes and values towards each other, society at large and the school demonstrate a high level of understanding of the principles of citizenship.
- The time available for the delivery of this programme in Years 7 to 9 is limited so all students may not cover the course.
- The teacher assessments and reports made at the end of Year 9 in 2004 did not fully meet requirements for reporting citizenship.

### Commentary

104. The school's Religion and Values Education programme (RAVE) integrates well the teaching of personal, health and social education, citizenship and religious education. It provides a good framework for assemblies and the school's approach to providing a daily act of collective worship for all students through the thought for the day delivered in form tutor time.
105. The school has a well-developed personal, health and social education programme, delivered in the main by form tutors, in which all statutory requirements are met. In Years 7 to 9 the programme is allocated one period a week in addition to the form tutor time, part of which is used for assembly. Approximately half the lessons available over the year have a citizenship focus and the other lessons relate to personal, health and social education related issues. Good use is made of this time in Year 7 for small group discussions to support the students in settling into their new school. In Years 10 and 11 additional time is given to citizenship, careers education and personal, social and health education in a single fortnightly period. Overall the personal, health and social education lessons seen were good. Teachers have a good command of topics and students respond well with interest and maturity.
106. Due the timing of the inspection and the school's arrangement for the delivery of citizenship, very little evidence was available to inspect the subject in depth. It was possible to observe only one lesson with a clear citizenship focus and because of the timing of the inspection, there were no samples of students' previous work available. However, students interviewed were able to talk well about the principles of citizenship and give examples where they and the school were actively involved in local, national and international activities. In the lesson seen, teaching was satisfactory and gave students the opportunity to demonstrate above average standards in considering the role of different groups in challenging attitudes to racism.
107. The leadership of the subject co-ordinator has been very effective in drawing up detailed schemes of work, supported by suitable resources, and in undertaking a cross-curricular audit to identify the contribution of all subjects to citizenship. A large team of teachers is well supported by these schemes of work and lesson plans which effectively identify Active Citizenship Experiences (ACE). Satisfactory progress has been made in implementing an ambitious programme which meets the requirements of the citizenship curriculum. However, given the pressure on time, particularly in Years 7 to 9, current plans for monitoring are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all students will receive full entitlement and that inclusion of citizenship activities is consistently covered in ACE lessons planned across the curriculum. Extra-curricular activities contribute very well to the citizenship education of the large numbers of students who participate. In 2004 an overall assessment of students' achievement within the RAVE programme was made and reported on at the end of Year 9, but this did not give sufficient details of students' competences in citizenship. The plan for assessment at the end of the 2004/5 academic year fully meets requirements.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### **Level 3 GCE AS level courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	11	100	98.6	54.5	50.2	96.4	87.5
Biology	5	100	96.4	0	39.2	64	78.6
Business studies	8	100	98.7	12.5	36.8	70.0	80.1
Chemistry	6	100	97.6	50.0	49.0	90.0	84.9
Communication studies	3	100	99.4	0	37.8	66.7	82.1
Drama	10	100	99.5	30.0	40.1	84.0	83.6
English/English language	14	100	99.4	35.7	36.3	80.0	80.9
Design and technology	5	100	97.8	20	35.0	76.0	77.9
General studies	27	96.3	94.7	22.2	31.0	67.4	73.1
Geography	7	85.7	98.7	0	44.5	62.9	84.0
History	11	90.9	99.0	63.6	44.6	89.1	84.6
Information technology	6	100	95.6	16.7	24.6	66.7	69.5
Mathematics	10	100	96.7	30.0	55.6	74.0	88.8
Music	3	100	98.8	66.7	38.9	93.3	81.1
Other social studies	4	100	97.4	100	42.7	105.0	81.8
Physics	2	100	96.7	0	44.6	50.0	81.7
Religious studies	1	100	98.8	100	46.7	100	85.6
Sociology	5	100	98.2	20.0	44.3	76.0	83.6
Spanish	1	100	98.3	0	50.2	40.0	86.9
Sports/PE	5	100	98.0	20.0	30.9	60.0	75.2

**Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	100	80.1	100	23.7	60.0	29.9
Biology	10	20.0	65.2	0	11.2	5.0	20.6
Business studies	8	75.0	76.4	12.5	16.3	18.8	26.2
Chemistry	2	50.0	72.7	0	23.8	15.0	24.1
Communication studies	1	100	86.4	0	23.8	20.0	32.0
Drama	3	100	86.5	33.3	19.6	33.3	30.6
English/English language	3	66.7	82.9	0	17.5	13.3	28.7
French	1	100	78.2	0	18.9	40.0	27.6
Design and technology	2	100	74.9	50.0	15.1	40.0	25.3
General studies	31	48.4	73.9	3.2	17.8	12.3	25.7
Geography	10	40.0	74.3	0	19.8	10.0	26.5
History	2	100	80.7	0	19.5	20.0	28.6
Mathematics	6	83.8	61.9	16.7	17.1	31.7	22.1
Other social studies	10	80.0	69.7	20.0	16.7	25.0	24.1
Physics	4	75.0	68.6	0	14.4	17.5	22.7
Sociology	5	100	71.8	20.0	18.4	28.0	25.4
Sports/PE	1	100	73.2	0	11.4	20.0	23.1
Leisure and recreation (VCE)	12	66.7	62.9	0	10.2	38.3	57.9

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of very well organised teaching.
- Students are very positive about the subject because they feel that they are doing well.
- The work is challenging for students at all levels of attainment.
- Teachers mark work well and give constructive feedback to students.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Excellent
Management of the subject	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Good

#### Commentary

108. Students achieve well because teaching is very good, stimulating, well organised and challenging. They are very positive about the subject and say that they are doing well because of the very high quality teaching. For the majority of students English is their third or fourth subject and they tend to concentrate on the subjects they are likely to study in higher education. Lessons are intellectually challenging and students are encouraged to form their own views and take responsibility for their learning. Most students are articulate and are prepared to exchange ideas in pairs or groups. Their presentations in lessons indicate good preparation at home and good understanding of the texts that they are studying.
109. Teachers focus on the analysis of texts with students learning to support their ideas by the use of quotation. All the sixth form teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are conducted at a good pace with considerable enthusiasm. Lessons are carefully planned with a good range of activities which sustain students' interest. Relationships within the teaching groups are very good with an ethos of mutual support. All students are expected to work hard at understanding difficult ideas and concepts. Students are given a lot of practice in writing different types of essays, including literary critical pieces. They develop a good understanding of the language and structure of different types of writers and their own personal writing improves as a result. In a Year 13 lesson on Chaucer, skilful teaching enabled students to make intelligent links between *The Merchant's Tale* and other literature they had studied. In Year 13 the majority of students can write fluently and understand a range of technical literary and linguistic terms.
110. Standards in the 2002 A-level and AS examinations were below average but improved in 2003 and were around the national average. Boys have done better than girls in the 2004 examinations. The proportion of students achieving the higher grades is below average. Standards in the current Year 13 at the start of the year are in line with the national average and this represents good achievement for some students with relatively low GCSE grades.
111. In the sixth form, teachers work together to ensure all aspects of the examination syllabus are covered well. The sharing of teaching ensures students experience a wide range of different approaches and ideas about texts. This is managed extremely well by the head of department and the other sixth form teachers. Preparation for examinations is thorough but not at the expense of encouraging students to read widely. Students understand the assessment schemes and know what to do to improve. Since the last inspection improvement has been

good. Teaching is now very good and the quality of assessment and marking is a real strength.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

112. Standards of language and literacy in the sixth form are **good**. Most students are confident speakers, listeners and writers. They use research methods well; for example, in product design students are gaining a good understanding of design and ideas are based on extensive research using a number of sources. In science, students make valuable contributions and discuss their ideas sensibly. In geography, students successfully synthesised information using a number of sources and produced detailed reports and students who are less willing to engage in discussions are also encouraged to contribute orally.

### MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong subject knowledge base provided by experienced teachers.
- There are very good relationships between students and teachers.
- There is insufficient constructive feedback linked to the marking of students' work.
- There are insufficient opportunities for independent learning.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Standards seen	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

#### Commentary

113. A-level results in 2003 were below the national average. Those students who were entered for AS level examinations in 2003 obtained results well above the national average. Students entered for A-level in 2004 included not only those with AS accreditation but also those who had chosen not to seek AS accreditation and A-level results for 2004 were similar to those for 2003. In work seen during the inspection achievement is satisfactory with student attainment at AS and A-level in line with national expectations based on their prior attainment.

114. Teaching in Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory. Teachers are very secure in their own subject knowledge and lessons are well planned with clear objectives that are conveyed to students. Some lessons are, however, teacher dominated and students do not actively take part in directing their own work so that they passively follow the work set. The marking of students' work is unsatisfactory. Students mark much of their own work and there is a lack of constructive written feedback from teachers that would help improve future performance. Very good working relationships exist between students and teachers, as a result of which students are comfortable when approaching their teachers to request help and guidance.

115. At sixth form level the recently appointed head of mathematics is providing good leadership. Management, now satisfactory, had been unsatisfactory with regard to the monitoring of assessment procedures and this has been identified as a priority for future development. Analysis of student performance has been established and now includes subject-specific value added measures to measure progress and set appropriate targets. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

116. Students have **good** skills in using and applying mathematics across the curriculum; for example, in science students use a very wide range of scientific formulae competently. They manipulate equations, substitute numerical values and calculate results correctly. In geography, students use their mathematical skills to analyse, synthesise and present information.

## SCIENCE

### Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge helps students to learn well.
- Very good relationships and attitudes make lessons productive.
- An above average proportion of students fail to gain a grade.

#### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

#### Commentary

117. Results in the GCE A-level examinations in physics vary from year to year. In 2003 results were below average though they were a little above average in 2002. In both years the proportion of the highest grades A or B were below average but all students gained a grade. Unvalidated results for 2004 suggest they will be below average. However, in 2004 an above average proportion of students, about 1 in 4, failed to gain a grade. Results in the GCE AS level examinations fluctuate. In 2003 they were above average though without any of the highest grades. Unvalidated results for 2004 show that almost two-thirds of the students failed to gain a grade because their prior attainment was insufficient to enable them to fully meet the demands of the course.

118. The standard of students' work seen during the inspection is above average. Students in the upper sixth form use a very wide range of scientific formulae competently. They manipulate equations, substitute numerical values and calculate results correctly. Students in the lower sixth form had been in the school for only two weeks at the time of the inspection but by applying equations from their GCSE course made rapid progress in understanding how bodies fall under the influence of gravity.

119. Overall, teaching is good. The best lessons are brisk and well planned. Students make valuable contributions and discuss their ideas sensibly. The use of digital projectors adds interest and the department website provides students with valuable information about the subject and course. Teachers use questions well to allow students to recall previous knowledge, to apply it to new situations and draw logical conclusions. They show expert knowledge of their subject and answer questions competently. Students learn well. Their very good attitudes and very good relationships with their teachers play a significant part in making lessons effective. As a result of the good teaching and attitudes, students' achievement is good. In a very good lesson sampled in chemistry, students were carrying out calculations on

equilibrium constants competently. In a very good lesson sampled in biology, students were learning about the resolution limits of light microscopes, about the structure of electron microscopes and the structure of human cheek cells.

120. Leadership and management are good. The teachers' work is monitored and organized effectively. Students' progress is well documented, they play an active part in assessing any areas of weakness and parents are regularly informed of progress made. However, last year insufficient attention was paid to ensuring that students' prior qualifications were sufficient for them to successfully embark on AS and A-level courses. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is good

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management has greatly improved the quality of post-16 provision in recent years.
- Very good teaching enables students to extend and apply their learning and achieve very well.
- Excellent cost effective partnership arrangements give students a choice of vocational and more traditional A-level courses.
- High quality marking and assessment encourage students to evaluate and develop their work and gain confidence as independent learners.
- Very good relationships between staff and students foster learning and achievement.

### Summary of key inspection judgements:

Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

### Commentary

121. In 2003 the attainment of A-level ICT students in Year 13 was broadly in line with the average for sixth forms nationally and was higher than in the previous year. The standards achieved by A-level computer studies students in 2003 were lower than those of the A-level ICT group. The 2004 AVCE results were not available at the time of the inspection. However, the school predicts a further rise in standards, with more students achieving A and B grades. The number of students taking ICT in the sixth form has risen steadily in recent years. There are currently 12 students taking the AVCE in Year 12 and 15 students in Year 13. There is a predominance of male students in both years. The number of students taking A-level computer studies is also rising, with six students opting for this course in 2004.
122. Standards of work seen are above average and students are achieving very well in Years 12 and 13. This is evident in their written work and in the progress they make in lessons. Extended pieces of writing, such as descriptions of design briefs, research on user requirements and assignment evaluations are generally well constructed and apposite. Coursework is well presented and organised. Students work in a focused and productive manner on practical assignments, supporting one another and showing increasing independence as learners.
123. Teaching is very good. A very good rapport exists between teachers and students, based on mutual respect. Teachers know their students well and have high expectations of them. They

are also aware of students' differing needs and tailor their support accordingly. Whole class teaching, often linked to homework and introductory practical tasks, is a very good feature of sixth form provision. Students develop a solid foundation of knowledge and skills, which is reinforced and extended through well chosen practical assignments. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers give good written and oral feedback. Assessment criteria are shared very effectively with students, who are actively encouraged to evaluate their own work and identify areas for improvement.

124. The leadership and management of ICT in the sixth form are very good. The co-ordinator has successfully led the implementation of the AVCE course, working with colleagues to develop resources and teaching schemes. The co-ordinator has also worked with colleagues to widen the range of ICT opportunities for all post-16 students and match them more closely to their needs and interests. The changes to A-level provision have already increased the numbers of students taking ICT in the sixth form. Provision for students opting to take computer studies has improved in recent years and is now excellent. The course is taught at a nearby secondary school in a new and very well equipped computer centre. The quality of teaching is very good and students taking the course deem it to be both challenging and enjoyable. Observations of teaching and learning, scrutiny of work and discussions with students suggest that the improvements in provision will also raise standards.

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

125. Students have **well developed** skills in the use of ICT within the subject and across the curriculum. For example, in product design, very good use is made of ICT in coursework folios for research and presentation. In science, digital projectors and the home grown science website are used to good effect by students to support their learning. In music technology, because students have regular use of a state of the art recording studio, their sequencing, recording and arranging skills improve.

## **HUMANITIES**

126. Insufficient work was seen to make an overall judgement on history provision. One history lesson, however, was observed in which good teaching enabled students to achieve well in making presentations to explain events in the 1572 Dutch revolution. Standards were average. The sixth form history curriculum is under review and the acquisition of a wider range of textbooks as an aid to understanding historical interpretation is underway. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these changes.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging.
- There is a strong focus on raising achievement.
- Very good use is made of information and communication technology.
- Students are involved in the assessment of their own work and this is highly effective in raising their levels of achievement.
- The department is organised efficiently.



## Summary of key inspection judgements:

Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

### Commentary

127. Standards at A-level and AS level in 2003 were well below national averages. Standards at A-level improved in 2004 but were still below national averages. However, at AS level in 2004 standards were above national averages. Standards of current Year 12 and Year 13 students are well above average and the achievement of these students is very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Well-planned and detailed classroom resources are used effectively to stimulate challenging questions from the students and they are actively engaged in their learning. They interact well with teachers and with each other in group discussions. Higher attaining students are encouraged to make further research, whilst students who are less willing to engage in discussions are also encouraged to contribute orally.
128. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and a very good understanding of how students learn effectively and constantly strive to make lessons interesting and varied. Students are engrossed in their work and have very positive attitudes. They achieve very well in lessons because their understanding of complex issues improves. Time is used very productively but also allows for reflection at the end of a lesson. Teachers assess work thoroughly. In their marking, teachers draw attention to the strengths and weaknesses of written work and this helps students to improve their work. Students have a very good understanding of the levels they are working at and what steps they need to take to improve.
129. Leadership and management are very good because procedures for lesson planning and assessment are kept under review, performance data is monitored very well and changes are made where necessary. This is now resulting in improved standards in examinations. The quality of the provision in geography has improved very well since the last inspection because the very good standards of teaching and learning now ensure that students have a very good understanding of the modules within the demanding syllabus and there is an improved appreciation of the rigours of assessment at this level.

### Religious education

130. Insufficient work was seen to make an overall judgement on religious education provision. In the one religious education lesson seen standards were good and students achieved well because the good teaching supported good learning. For example, during the discussion by A-level students of complex moral issues, they were able to refer effectively to ethical theories and to use scriptural references very well. However, the achievement of sixth form students as a whole is hindered by the limited scope of the religious education programme.

## ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

### Design and technology

#### Product Design

131. The work in product designed was sampled. In 2003 standards were above average for AS students at the end of Year 12 and for the A2 students at the end of Year 13. Inspection

findings show that standards are above average and achievement is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good. Teachers' expectations are high and the work is challenging. At both AS and A2 level, students experiment and explore a range of design concepts leading to creative outcomes. Very good use is made of ICT in coursework folios for research and presentation. Students are gaining a good understanding of design and ideas are based on extensive research using a number of sources.

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

### **Drama**

Insufficient work was seen to make an overall judgement on drama provision. One drama lesson was observed, however, in which very good teaching enabled students to achieve very well in interpreting part of a Joe Orton script. Standards observed were above the national average and learning was very good with students demonstrating very good skills in peer evaluation.

### **Music and music technology**

Provision in music and music technology is **excellent**.

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

- The teaching is very good and encourages students to learn very well.
- Results in music technology are below expectation.
- Improving students' ability in the listening and analysing modules would help to raise standards.
- Students are highly motivated and their attitudes are excellent.
- The accommodation and resources are excellent.

#### **Summary of key inspection judgements:**

Standards seen	Average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Excellent
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

132. The AS and A2 music results in 2003 were above average and some students gained A and B grades. Whilst the A2 results in 2004 were again above average the AS results fell below average. Music technology is a relatively new subject and results were below average for both years as all of the courses are very inclusive and open to students of all abilities, some of whom find the demands of the course to be very challenging. Male students are in the majority and generally out-perform female students particularly in the technology courses.
133. Standards in work seen for both courses are broadly average. This is very good achievement considering that the subject attracts many students who have not done music before. Because all students take part in the exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities this adds value to their musical experience. Students speak highly of these courses and would recommend them to others. Six of the more talented A2 music students have recently won places in higher education to study music.
134. Teaching is very good and students improve their learning because lessons are challenging and well planned. Music technology students are very well-taught and because they have regular use of the recording studio their sequencing, recording and arranging skills improve. To enable the music students to develop their ability in performing and composing they are

taught to make critical judgements about styles and structures in musical developments. As many students find the listening and analysing module difficult, teachers work hard to improve aural skills and general musical knowledge. The work is regularly assessed to give students a good indication of their present performance and likely grades.

135. College placements and professional workshops widen students' horizons and strengthen their understanding of career possibilities within the music industry. Because of the high quality of the musical activities, students take part in performances at venues such as the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and the Royal Albert Hall. This contributes well towards their personal development. The quality of leadership is first rate and dedicated to raising standards further. Management is strong and the thorough self-evaluation of the department has established the strengths and areas for improvement. The improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

*Inspection judgement* **Sixth form grade** **School grade**

<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Students' achievement	3	3

<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>2</b>
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well students learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		1
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1	1

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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