

INSPECTION REPORT

GUILSBOROUGH SCHOOL

Guilsborough

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122061

Headteacher: Mrs C Staley

Lead inspector: Mrs C Worthington

Dates of inspection: 13th - 16th September 2004

Inspection number: 268815

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 -18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1397
School address:	West Haddon Road Guilsborough
Postcode:	NN6 8QE
Telephone number:	(01604) 740 641
Fax number:	(01604) 749 104
Appropriate authority:	Northamptonshire
Chairman of governors:	Mr John Burdett

Date of previous inspection: 18th January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Guilsborough School is a larger than average comprehensive for pupils aged 11-18, which serves a very extensive rural catchment north west of Northampton. It is popular and oversubscribed. There are more boys than girls. Many pupils come from a large number of small, scattered villages and one small town; they travel by school bus. The area is socially advantaged and the proportion of pupils currently entitled to free school meals (2.9 per cent) is well below the national average. Most pupils are white British. Only two pupils do not use English as their first language and are at an early stage of learning it. Attainment on entry to the school is above average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (15.7 per cent) is about average, as is that of pupils with statements of special educational needs (1.8 per cent). These needs relate mostly to dyslexia, moderate learning difficulty, social, emotional and behavioural problems, or physical impairment. The school has Technology College status. It also holds the Artsmark and Sportsmark awards as well as awards for Healthy Schools, Investors in People - with leadership and management extension, Schools Achievement and the Citizenship Gold. The school is involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, Young Enterprise and Networked Schools Learning Community. The headteacher is currently on secondment to another school in Northamptonshire, but was present for the inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20609	Carol Worthington	Lead inspector	
9708	Sylvia Daintrey	Lay inspector	
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	English
17453	Clive Edney	Team inspector	Mathematics
16786	Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science
32252	Deborah Wring	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
8632	Derek Beer	Team inspector	Geography
14841	Michael Duffey	Team inspector	History
18673	Richard Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious education
30695	Geraldine Dinan	Team inspector	Art and design
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology
24026	Celia Holland	Team inspector	Music
19169	Tim Lawes	Team inspector	Physical education; Citizenship
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Business studies; Economics
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	Psychology; Drama
1578	Margaret Sinclair	Team inspector	Sociology
1249	Joe Edge	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
 Barley House
 Oakfield Grove
 Clifton
 Bristol
 BS8 2BN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Guilsborough is a **good school** with some very good features. Pupils achieve well as a result of the good teaching they receive to reach standards that are well above average. It is well regarded in the community, popular and oversubscribed. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and management is good throughout the school. It gives **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in GCSE examinations are high, particularly in mathematics and music.
- Provision in the sixth form is very good.
- The teaching staff is well qualified and all teachers have high expectations; sometimes, marking is inconsistent.
- Enrichment of the curriculum is very good.
- Very good attention to staff professional development ensures teachers keep up to date.
- Financial management is very good.
- Very good attendance and positive attitudes are conducive to learning.
- Achievement is good in most subjects, but a notable exception is design and technology in the sixth form, where it is satisfactory.

The school has made **good improvement since its previous inspection**. All key issues have received attention and the statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form and collective worship are now in place. Standards are rising faster than those nationally. Teaching and learning have improved substantially, and the good leadership and management have been maintained, despite many staffing difficulties, and improved to very good in some areas. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have improved considerably, but there are still access problems, which result in a significant number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 not receiving their full entitlement to ICT. As a Technology College, the school has made good progress in developing e-learning, but has not been able to increase the take-up of the design and technology advanced level until the current term because of staffing shortfalls over the past year. Now these have been resolved, all is in place for the school to improve further.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11 and in the subjects inspected in the sixth form. This largely accords with test and examination results, which showed good improvement in 2004 from those of 2003. **Achievement** is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, particularly in English. In the sixth form, students achieve well and examination results in 2004 show good

improvement from 2003, especially in subjects started in the sixth form, such as psychology and sociology. Standards in mathematics are high by Year 13, but in design and technology, they are not as high as would be expected for the school's Technology College status.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**; they are **very good** in the sixth form. Pupils' personal qualities – including their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** – are **good**. The very good 'Excellence in Moral Values' programme has a very positive impact in the sixth form, and is now being adapted for the rest of the school. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education provided by the school is good**. **Teaching and learning** are good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. Excellent teaching was seen in music in Year 11 and very good teaching in mathematics throughout the school. Teachers have good subject expertise and high expectations, recognising the above average capability of their pupils, who learn well as a result. They share expertise well through training, and this is particularly helping the development of e-learning, for example. Assessment has improved since the previous inspection and is now good, but teachers' marking is not consistent in all subjects.

The quality of the **curriculum is good** throughout the school with a wide range of appropriate courses at all levels. A particular strength is the flexibility in curriculum planning and in examination entry in Years 10 and 11. The school website contains much of the curriculum material and is becoming a powerful tool for learning in several departments. Extra-curricular activities are good. The school is well resourced and the new sixth form facilities are conducive to the development of independent study.

Arrangements for pupils' **care, welfare, health and safety** are **good**. Provision of **support, advice and guidance** is **good**. The school works well to involve pupils in its work and development.

Links with **parents** are **satisfactory** and those with the **community** are **good**. Links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher and head of sixth form lead very well and the senior managers are very effective in their line management in the curriculum and pastoral care. Middle management is good overall; several heads of department have fairly recently been appointed to overcome staffing problems of last year. The school pays very good attention to the induction and professional development of its staff and is highly committed to inclusion, which is evident in all its work. The work of the **governing body is satisfactory**. Governors are very adept in carrying out their designated duties, particularly in financial management, the curriculum and special educational needs, but have not ensured that all subject requirements are met for ICT in Years 10 and 11.

Leadership and management of the school's Technology College status are good and well supported by governors. The development of e-learning in the school and community is significant in this rural situation. The school could, however, do more to promote advanced design and technology subjects now that staffing difficulties have been overcome, and make the specialist ethos of the school more prominent.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are positive in their views of the school, but a significant minority expressed concern about the incidence of bullying. Inspectors found that physical bullying is negligible but that there are incidences of verbal harassment, sometimes taking place outside the school and on the buses, which the pastoral staff of the school spend many hours trying to resolve. The headteacher and pastoral team take all forms of bullying seriously and have developed an extensive range of strategies for raising awareness of the issues involved, but sometimes the school does not communicate the outcomes quickly enough to parents.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise attainment in design and technology subjects in the sixth form.
- Ensure that improvements in English progress in Year 7 is maintained.
- Raise the profile of the school's specialist status by showing more recognition of its achievements in the technological subjects and improving their uptake by sixth form students in advanced studies.
- Ensure that marking of work is carried out consistently by all teachers;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that ICT is used in all subjects in Years 10 and 11 according to their National Curriculum requirements.

THE SIXTH FORM AT GUILSBOROUGH SCHOOL

Caters for 264 students in a good range of academic and some vocational courses

OVERALL EVALUATION

Sixth form provision is very good. The school is the main provider of further education in this rural community and offers a wide variety of courses, maintaining some, such as modern languages, with only small numbers so that students' choices are not restricted. It also takes a small proportion of students (almost all from its own Year 11) with lower qualifications than might be expected elsewhere, notably in science. In most of the subjects inspected, teaching was found to be very good; students achieved well and often very well to attain well above average standards. The exception is design and technology, where standards are average. The school does not have as good enough provision here as befits its Technology College status. The sixth form is very well led and managed and, despite a small subsidy from the main school to maintain curriculum breadth, is cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good teaching and learning in many subjects, supported by very effective resources.

- Very good leadership and management.
- Achievement is very good in many subjects but, in design and technology, it is satisfactory.
- The 'Excellence in Moral Values' programme underpins the very good ethos of the sixth form.
- The sixth form website is a very good aid to learning and personal development.

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 English is very good . Students attain standards well above average. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and high expectations; they support students well. Achievement is good.
Mathematics	Provision is very good . Standards are well above average and students' achievement is very good. Teaching is very good but more opportunities for independent learning could further develop students' confidence.
Science	Provision in physics is good . Students' attainment at GCSE causes fluctuation in examination results at A-level, but they are usually above average. Teaching and learning are good, and lead to good achievement.
Information and communication technology	Provision is very good . The department has worked hard for its students to achieve very good results, particularly in vocational courses. Relationships are excellent and students gain in confidence from their teachers' very good expertise. They achieve very well.
Humanities	<p>Provision in psychology is very good. Results are well above average. Very good, well planned teaching uses a stimulating variety of methods which draw in students' imagination and interest, leading to very good learning and achievement.</p> <p>Provision in sociology is good. Students achieve well as a result of very good management of learning.</p> <p>Provision in geography is very good. There is excellent support for learning through the study guide and school website; standards are well above average. Achievement is good.</p> <p>Provision in history is very good. Excellent resources and support for learning results in well above average standards Achievement is very good.</p>
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is satisfactory . Results have been poor of late but are currently average, with some good work being produced. Numbers taking sixth form courses are low for a Technology College, but have increased this year. Achievement is satisfactory.
Visual and performing arts and media	<p>Provision in art and design is very good. Students achieve well because they have well-qualified specialist teachers who know them well and give individual tuition.</p> <p>Provision in drama is very good. Standards are well above average, and students acquire very good acting and practical improvisation skills. Teaching and learning are very good because teachers' specialist knowledge of dramatic literature and practical acting skills are used well to inspire students.</p>

Business

Provision in **business studies and economics** is **very good**. Students attain above average standards because of the very good teaching they receive. Teachers all have very good expertise and experience of working in business or industry, which they pass on to their students. Achievement is good.

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

This is very good. Students are very much involved in their own learning and the life of the school. They also have the opportunity to work through their own support and careers programme using materials available on the sixth form's website.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is very well led and managed. Leadership is innovative and strives for excellence. Many procedures, for example, those for students' assessment and evaluation of teaching, originate in the sixth form and are then adopted in the main school. Pioneering work from heads of department is recognised and developed, such as the sixth form website. Qualities of leadership are developed and supported in students so they take responsibility and create good role models for the rest of the school.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students value the opportunities presented to them in the sixth form highly, and are particularly pleased to be treated as young adults. They greatly appreciate the support and guidance provided for them, including that on completing university applications, although a small number would like more advice on what they should do after they leave school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are above average by the end of Year 9, and well above by the end of Years 11 and 13. Pupils and students achieve well throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in mathematics and science are well above average by the end of Year 9.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average by the end of Year 11.
- Achievement in mathematics is very good throughout the school, as it is in GCSE history, geography and music, and A-level psychology, sociology and drama.
- Standards at A-level in design and technology are only average, and students' achievement, though satisfactory, is noticeably lower than in other A-level subjects.
- Unvalidated examination and test results in 2004 show improvement in most subjects, including English in Years 9 and 11 and German in Year 11.

Commentary

1. Pupils enter the school with above average standards, as measured by their performance in the National tests for 11-year-olds in English, mathematics and science. This is confirmed by the cognitive testing carried out by the school in Year 7. In subjects other than those tested nationally, however, attainment on entry is more variable (though about average), reflecting pupils' range of experience in primary education.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.6 (35.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	39.2 (38.3)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.2 (35.9)	33.3 (33.3)

There were 231 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	65 (64)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.9 (38.5)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 214 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	93.6 (94.5)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	38.4 (40.5)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	263.5 (264.7)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 89 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Standards achieved in National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2003 were in line with the national average in English, and well above in mathematics and science. Standards fell in English that year, previously having been above or well above average. In mathematics and science, the school maintained its well above average levels. The school's trend has risen faster than the national trend from 2000. In 2003, pupils did not achieve as well as they should have done in English and the school put in various measures designed to improve achievement, particularly that of lower ability boys and average ability girls, so that in 2004, results improved a good deal and, like those of mathematics and science, once again reached levels which would have indicated at least above average standards compared with the 2003 national average. (Comparisons for 2004 are not yet available).

3. Some parents expressed the view that their children were underachieving in English in Year 7 and the inspection evidence bears this out for 2004 Year 9 pupils, whose work showed that they were coasting in Year 7, but made very good progress in Year 9, to reach standards commensurate with their prior attainment. Past work of the current Year 8 also showed evidence of repeating Year 6 material in Year 7 and some degree of coasting and underachievement was apparent. Under the leadership of the new head of department, schemes of work are being re-written to ensure progress is consistent throughout, and are already in use in the current Year 7, where improvement over the previous year's work was apparent. They are still consolidating by doing 'bridging units' but extending this to Year 7 work much sooner. Achievement was seen to be good in this year, but because of the slow Year 7 start made by the present Years 8 and 9, it is satisfactory overall in English at this stage.

4. In mathematics and science, achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 with standards well above average in mathematics and above in science. In ICT, teacher assessments showed well above average attainment in 2004; currently, attainment is above average. In religious education, there was insufficient evidence to judge current standards by the end of Year 9, though teacher assessments showed above average attainment.

5. Achievement and progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. Of the subjects sampled, such pupils make satisfactory progress in geography; in English, science, ICT and design and technology, good progress is made, and it is very good in mathematics, music and art and design in Years 10 and 11; there is also some very good progress in physical education. Some very good progress, both academic and personal, was seen by pupils with the highest levels of need. Lack of support in some modern foreign language lessons, however, leads to some underachievement. The small amount of work of the very small number of pupils who do not speak English as their first language showed that they achieve well and make progress against their targets as well as other pupils.

6. The school's results at GCSE are steadily improving. The percentage of pupils gaining five A* to C grades in 2003 was well above average, as it had been for the previous three years, compared with all schools and those with pupils with similar prior attainment by the end of Year 9. The average GCSE point scores have risen steadily since 2000 and showed further improvement in 2004. Subjects in which pupils achieve particularly well are English, mathematics, science, history, geography, art and design, music, physical education, and in some design and technology subjects, namely textiles and systems and control, achievement is very good. This is invariably the result of good teaching and the high level of expertise and expectation and the efficacy of assessment. Standards in ICT in 2003 were well above average and in religious education, they were average.
7. In modern foreign languages, pupils achieved well in French but not in German in 2003, but such good measures were put into place that pupils did much better in German in 2004. They enter the school with limited prior attainment and make satisfactory progress overall. Many different teaching methods and curriculum changes have been tried, particularly to motivate boys, but standards are only average and there is little take-up in the sixth form. The school has had several long-standing staffing difficulties over the past two years, and the effects of these are being seen in the slight depression of standards, particularly in science and design and technology. Nevertheless, the maintenance of above average standards throughout bears witness to the strength of the line management and the hard work of the management team.
8. Literacy develops well across the school. It is consolidated in Years 7 to 9 and above average standards are maintained. Numeracy develops well through practice in science, design and technology and geography, in particular. Skills in ICT develop well in Years 7 to 9 but all pupils do not go on to consolidate this in Years 10 and 11.

Sixth form

9. Standards are well above average in many of the subjects inspected – English, mathematics, ICT, history, psychology, geography, art and design and drama. Achievement is very good in mathematics, and the newer A-level subjects of drama and psychology. Standards and achievement were at least good in all other subjects inspected, except for A-level design and technology, where it is satisfactory, but below that expected of a Technology College where raising standards in science and technology subjects is a major aim. The school has suffered major staffing problems in these two areas over the last year. There are signs of improvement in the numbers of design and technology students, but standards are still currently average – lower than most others in the sixth form. In this isolated rural school, students may be accepted onto courses with GCSE results below those normally accepted. This is sometimes the case with science subjects, in particular, and proposals for separate science courses in Years 10 and 11 are one way in which the school is planning to remedy the situation. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills develop very well in the sixth form.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good; they are very good in the sixth form. Pupils' personal qualities – including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development – are good. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' and students' high levels of attendance are a significant factor in their good achievement.
- The vast majority of pupils respond well and behave sensibly in lessons and other activities around the school.
- Students in the sixth form are mature young adults committed to learning, and they set a very good example for the rest of the school.
- The innovative 'Moral Values' programme is having a very good impact on students' personal development.

Commentary

10. The school's attendance rates have been consistently above the national average since the last inspection. In the 2003/4 reporting year, attendance rose by a further whole percentage point to reach 93.8 per cent. Although national comparative data are not yet available, this is likely to be well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is low and there is little truancy. Attendance was very good in most lessons seen during the inspection. Pupils' very good attendance enables them to make the most of the opportunities provided by the school and do not have major gaps in their learning. Parents fulfil their responsibilities very well in ensuring their children's regular attendance. The school monitors and promotes attendance effectively, with the pastoral team making good use of administrative staff and the education welfare service. Punctuality has improved since the last inspection because the arrangements for bussing the pupils in from the villages are better managed. This results in a purposeful start to the school day, with little disruption to assemblies and tutor periods. Punctuality to lessons remains good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	0.1
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

11. Pupils have positive views about the school and enjoy being with their friends and taking part in the activities available to them. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are particularly motivated to do well in their GCSE courses. The interest of different groups of pupils is successfully maintained through various programmes that challenge and support them to meet their individual needs. Attitudes and behaviour were good in most lessons seen during the inspection, reflecting the good quality of teaching and enabling the pupils to make good progress. As at the last inspection, the behaviour of pupils in Year 8 is not always as good as in the rest of the school. Some classes can occasionally be noisy and

restless in lessons, especially when new or inexperienced teachers do not insist on high standards of behaviour from the start. Last year, the school successfully deployed a range of strategies, including short periods of withdrawal, to improve the behaviour of targeted pupils - mostly boys - in Years 8 and 9. Pupils behave well in assemblies and when moving around the school, including at the end of the school day when they go onto the buses. They respond very well to the trust which staff place in them to have open access to the buildings at lunch-time. On the whole, they conduct themselves well on the narrow staircases in B block, but some incidents of pushing were observed during the inspection. The number of exclusions is low for a school of this size and has reduced further since the previous inspection. The number of racist incidents is also low.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1,298	54	1
Mixed – any mixed background	1	1	0
Parents preferred not to say	1	1	0

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

12. Some parents and pupils expressed a considerable level of concern about the incidence of bullying at the school when their views were sought by the inspection team. Inspectors found that there is a negligible amount of physical bullying, but that there are incidences of verbal harassment, sometimes taking place outside the school and on buses, which the pastoral staff of the school spend many hours trying to resolve. The headteacher and pastoral team take all forms of bullying seriously and have developed an extensive range of strategies for raising awareness of the issues involved, but could be quicker in communicating to parents how bullying incidents are dealt with. They respond to reported cases quickly and involve parents, pupils and external agencies well in their efforts. There are appropriate plans to develop the peer mentoring system further, so that younger pupils, in particular, can have greater access to someone nearer their age who can listen to and support them.

13. Pupils' personal development has improved since the previous inspection when it was satisfactory. By Year 11, they demonstrate a good level of independence, initiative and responsibility. Arrangements for collective worship now meet statutory requirements and themes for assemblies are now better planned and followed through in tutorial periods. Most of the assemblies seen during the inspection on the theme of 'Tolerance' were of good quality. As they get older, pupils develop a high level of ability and awareness when debating complex moral issues relating to personal dilemmas and relationships within families and society. Pupils co-operate well in lessons and take an active part in the life of the school, such as running clubs, putting on concerts, raising funds for charities and suggesting ideas to their year councils. The art and music departments make a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development. Pupils are soundly taught about other cultural traditions through the curriculum. A good feature in raising pupils' awareness of the

diversity of cultures in Britain is the visit by a small number of pupils to a school serving a multi-ethnic catchment area.

Sixth form

14. Students have very positive attitudes to life and studies in the sixth form. As a result, they make very good progress in their academic achievement and personal development. They respond very well to the high quality of teaching and to the opportunities to take responsibility, both for their own learning and within the life of the school. They are very good role models for younger pupils and provide good leadership and support for them in activities such as the school council, student forums and mentoring schemes. The head of the sixth form has developed an innovative programme – ‘Excellence in Moral Values’ - based on identified personal characteristics to deliver key elements of students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is very successful, as was seen in an excellent assembly for Year 12 students, which explored a higher order form of tolerance underpinned by the Christian idea of ‘grace’. Students build on their ability to discuss moral issues very well, for example, in psychology, where they discuss the ethical dimension of classic experiments and develop independent thinking skills to a high level. Students’ attendance is very good so they are able to complete their courses successfully.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. Teachers have good subject expertise, which is regularly updated by continuing professional development. They extend pupils’ literacy and numeracy and have high expectations of their capabilities and behaviour, which enables them to learn effectively. Assessment is good overall, but there are inconsistencies, particularly in marking.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teacher expertise in the majority of curriculum areas; very good in the sixth form.
- Major initiatives, such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy, having a good impact on literacy and numeracy.
- Outstanding teaching in music in Years 10 and 11; very good teaching in mathematics and art and design throughout the school.
- Very good teaching overall in the sixth form.
- ICT used very well in humanities and design and technology, but not enough in all subjects in Years 10 and 11 to meet statutory requirements.
- Assessment and marking good in most subjects.

Commentary

15. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school; 70 per cent of lessons observed were good or better and nearly 40 per cent were very good or excellent. The few unsatisfactory lessons were taught by teachers new to the school or those on training programmes. Outstanding teaching was seen in music in Year 11, and very good teaching was observed in mathematics and art and design throughout the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 170 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (3%)	59 (35%)	56 (33%)	42 (25%)	7 (4%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

16. Teachers have good expertise and high expectations; they recognise the above average capability of their pupils and strive for their success. They share expertise well through training sessions and through checking each other's work. In music, for example, the head of department uses his excellent expertise to help less experienced colleagues by sharing the teaching of examination classes, where each revises the other's topic. National initiatives, such as the Strategy for improvement at Key Stage 3, have had a good effect on teaching and learning, particularly in the core subjects. In mathematics, for example, teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are very good and pupils' achievement is built upon well in Years 10 and 11; achievement in mathematics is consequently very good throughout the school. Teachers' high expectations of pupils are apparent in most subjects, but particularly so in history, geography, religious education and music, where pupils have entered the school with average prior attainment and reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. This good achievement is as a result of good teaching.
17. Good teaching is underpinned by consistency in applying school policies. Teachers plan to a standard format and, in most lessons, provide for the full range of ability within classes. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, as it is for pupils of higher ability, including gifted and talented. Withdrawal lessons are taught well and pupils learn well. There are two pupils who do not speak English as their first language. They are fully integrated into all activities. The extent that subject teachers provide different strategies and materials to help pupils with special educational needs to learn is good and never less than satisfactory. This provision is very good in mathematics, music, and some of art and design and physical education. Effective support is given by teaching assistants in lessons. They work well with teachers and help in technical matters where necessary in practical subjects. There is, however, too little assistance at present as there are vacancies to be filled.
18. Teachers are successfully addressing the gap between the achievement of girls and boys, which reflects the gap seen nationally, by teaching single-sex classes for some subjects, such as English, and by using computers more widely for their motivating effect in geography and history, for example, where boys do particularly well and do not lag behind the girls. Boys' and girls' literacy develops well and widely in Years 7 to 9, in particular, as teachers build on the above average standards of English by developing the vocabulary of other curriculum subjects and widening reading and writing skills.

19. Teachers develop ICT skills well in Years 7 to 9 so that pupils are competent and reach above average standards by the time they are 14 years old. However, this does not continue consistently into Year 10, where pupils do not all acquire specific skills required for each National Curriculum subject.
20. Most teachers manage the behaviour of their pupils well by providing challenging work which requires pupils to apply themselves productively to their studies. There are some lapses of behaviour, and in some cases during the inspection, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory because of insecure behaviour management, but this was a rare occurrence, mainly with inexperienced or trainee teachers.
21. Parents brought up the question of homework, which many believe is inadequate. Inspectors found that the amount given was satisfactory and of a quality sufficient to extend the taught curriculum.
22. Assessment procedures are good. The development of assessment for learning has been one of the major thrusts of the school, and assessment is now more thorough and constructive than at the previous inspection. The school makes good use of benchmark data, the results of standardised tests and national examination results, to analyse pupils' performance and to guide planning. It uses them effectively to calculate end of key stage predictions, to monitor performance of individuals, borderline groups, by gender, and to set targets for achievement. Throughout Years 7 to 11, subject teachers add their own assessments, which are used to identify pupils who are underachieving, and take constructive action. External examination results are rigorously analysed, including the relative achievement of boys and girls, and the resultant action has a positive impact on achievement.
23. Target setting has improved as a result of whole-school training. Teachers use their own assessments to determine individual pupils' targets within subjects. The quality of target setting is, however, uneven. There is very good practice in some subjects, such as music, art and design and physical education, but in others, such as design and technology, targets are insufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels. In English, teachers apply good strategies but new teachers are not yet consistent in this.
24. Good use is made of assessment data to guide planning in departments and at whole-school level. The humanities department, for example, has used assessment data to revise its schemes of work radically in Years 7 to 9. Marking is usually conscientious and supportive. Pupils, therefore, know how well they are doing in most subjects, and how they can improve. However, in design and technology, insufficient attention is paid in marking to improving pupils' spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax, and marking does not always relate pupils' work to National Curriculum levels.

Sixth form

25. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. It has similar strengths to the teaching lower down the school, but teachers have very good expertise in the subjects they teach, and many of the initiatives to improve teaching are begun in the sixth form and extended to the rest of the school. A good example of this is the sharing of teaching expertise through

the use of focus groups whereby another member of staff and students themselves evaluate the lesson just given and consider how well it has enabled learning. This practice is particularly well used in psychology, where the teaching is very good, and also in geography, history, business studies, music, art and drama. A particularly good feature of sixth form teaching is the way in which students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, especially through the use of the Internet and school website. Very good ICT use is made in the science department, for example, in an interactive physics course, which enables students to manipulate information received in lessons to enhance their understanding. Assessment is very good. Effective systems are being used to identify good, average and below average understanding, and to take appropriate action.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. The opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities are good. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The flexible approach to curriculum planning and examination entry in Years 10 and 11.
- The curriculum provision in music and art and design is very good.
- Very good support for learning is provided through the school web site, especially in geography.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for students to progress from GCSE to a wide range of AS, A-level and increasing range of vocational courses.
- Opportunities for curriculum enrichment and for pupils' personal development are very good.
- The take-up of design and technology courses in the sixth form has been low, but has improved with the current Year 12.

Commentary

26. Overall, the curriculum successfully meets the needs and aspirations of pupils. It is very good in the range and quality of provision and the resources to support learning in music and art and design. The support for learning that is provided through the school web site is excellent in geography.
27. The school enters some pupils for GCSE examinations as early as Year 9. This is done to enable pupils to pursue vocational courses at college that the school cannot provide and also to achieve a GCSE grade in all subjects that they study. Pupils for whom academic courses are challenging and those who may become disaffected particularly benefit from this arrangement.

28. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English is good because it enhances both academic achievement and the extent that these pupils are included fully in the life and work of the school.
29. Opportunities for enrichment are very good. There is a very wide variety of experiences on offer both inside and outside the school day. These include many sporting, music and drama activities, along with residential opportunities, including music performances outside school, artists in residence and art workshops. Activities are planned to support subjects through visits (including foreign exchanges), visiting speakers, and through holiday booster classes. Although there are science and technology focused activities, these are fewer than those for arts, music and sport.
30. Statutory requirements are met for collective worship but not in the provision of ICT in Years 10 and 11. Aside from the compliance issues, progress since the last inspection has been good.
31. Provision for work-related learning is good. The main aspects of the national framework are in place and are co-ordinated effectively. Good progress has been made in integrating work-related activities across the curriculum, particularly through enrichment days and personal, social and health education programmes. Vocational education courses are taught effectively and the work experience programmes are managed well and are popular with students. As a result, students' achievement in work-related learning is good.
32. The audit of work-related activities that has been undertaken by individual subjects shows that there is satisfactory coverage of the statutory requirements. There is particularly good provision in music, art and geography. The successful links that the school has developed with businesses and further education colleges are utilised well to provide appropriate opportunities for pupils. Whilst a number of areas have been highlighted as needing further development, appropriate plans have been drawn up to address these, for instance, by introducing work shadowing and developing more flexible arrangements to meet the needs of all pupils through additional vocational and college-based courses. An enterprise group, based around running a shadow company, is being developed for pupils in Year 10.
33. The good progress made by the school in work-related learning has been recognised within Northamptonshire. The school's co-ordinator has been invited to sit on the county's steering group for work-related learning and the departmental guidance document has been adopted as a model for other schools to use.
34. Accommodation is mainly satisfactory with some good improvements made since the previous inspection. A new sixth form block has been built, two new science laboratories opened, a new purpose-built accommodation for music and the special educational needs department has its own area which allows staff to work as a team. The design and technology rooms are good but the department is not situated in rooms together. Issues such as the inadequate school hall, insufficient social areas and generally cramped conditions in English and mathematics remain from the previous inspection. There is a concern over the stairways in one teaching block, which can be crowded, particularly at

the beginning and end of lessons. The one-way system does always not appear to work at present. Generally, the building is well cared for by the pupils and there is very little graffiti or vandalism.

35. The match of well-qualified teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good in the main school, except in design and technology, where it is satisfactory. The provision of teaching assistants is satisfactory. The match of well-qualified teachers to the needs of the curriculum in the sixth form is very good. Learning resources are generally good, and improved in a number of areas since the last inspection. The increase in ICT equipment has resulted in better access for most departments to the Internet and Intranet. Refurbishment of the library/ resource centre is ongoing and an experienced librarian has been appointed. Some departments make use of resources outside school, such as field centres, exchange visits and various departmental trips, but visits to museums and galleries are not undertaken in art. The use of resources is generally good and supports learning.

Sixth form

36. The school provides a good range of academic and vocational courses that meet the needs of those students who wish to continue their education at school. Students are able to mix AS and vocational courses and careful guidance is given on entry to the sixth form to ensure that the range of courses available meets individual needs. In addition, the school makes notable efforts to provide breadth in the curriculum by maintaining subjects that attract small numbers of students, such as modern foreign languages. Curricular provision is good overall and very good in music and art and design, but there is insufficient take-up of design and technology subjects. The support for learning provided by the school web site is very good. The school's good provision for work-related learning and careers education is continued into the sixth form.
37. The programme of induction for sixth formers is very good. Close links have been established with Moulton College and Northampton College so that the needs of students most suited to particular vocational courses can be met away from the school, if necessary. This sensitive approach contributes to the very good retention rate whereby the vast majority of students continue their studies through from AS to A2 level.
38. The very good enrichment programme enables all students to take part in a physical education programme and to pursue courses in subjects such as law, film studies and Latin through distance learning and after-school sessions. Staffing and accommodation are very good; resources are good. The sixth form has new premises which offer very good facilities.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. Provision of support, advice and guidance is good. The school works well to involve pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Key staff know pupils very well as individuals and work effectively to ensure their wellbeing.
- There are successful arrangements to settle new pupils into school in Year 7, to support pupils with particular needs, and to guide Year 11 pupils in their preparation for public examinations.
- Provision of support, advice and guidance in the sixth form is very good and students are very much involved in their own learning and the life of the school.

Commentary

39. A strong staff team - including the headteacher, head of sixth form, heads of year, pastoral and learning support assistants – are highly committed to the care and welfare of the pupils. They are well trained and experienced in carrying out their roles. As a result, the school is a safe and friendly environment in which pupils can make progress in their learning and development. Arrangements for child protection and for first-aid are good, with key staff having very good expertise and working effectively with parents and external agencies, where appropriate. Health and safety procedures have improved since the previous inspection, when some issues were identified within departments. Governors, teaching and non-teaching staff work well together to monitor arrangements and conduct risk assessments and they take effective action when required. There is a very good system for reporting and investigating accidents. Supervision of pupils' arrival and departure on the buses is carried out well. A little more attention could be paid to the supervision of pupils on some of the narrow staircases.
40. Parents are very pleased with the induction arrangements for their children. A notable feature is the residential experience for Year 7 which takes place during their first month at the school. Key staff take particular care to identify and help those pupils who may have difficulties in transferring from primary to secondary school. Learning support assistants are very well trained and deployed to meet the wide range of individual specialist needs of pupils, including those who arrive at the school with no English. Effective programmes are put in place to help pupils learn, develop in confidence and self-esteem, and undertake studies that motivate them, such as college placements in Years 10 and 11. Strategies to stretch the pupils identified as gifted or talented are also good. Time in tutorial periods is better used than at the previous inspection: most tutors establish a good relationship with their form group and provide constructive activities that support their pupils' learning and development. Intensive support and guidance is provided for pupils in Year 11 to help them achieve to the best of their capability. This is based on regular checks of progress and the allocation of staff to mentor targeted pupils.
41. Care and guidance is very good for the pupils with special educational needs. There are very good procedures for assessment and identification. The procedures are very thorough, and are used well. Pupils' progress is reviewed often and very well. All pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans, formally reviewed twice-yearly. Parents and pupils are involved suitably in the use of these plans. The targets in individual education plans are clear. These plans provide good advice to teachers about how to help pupils to improve. Good provision is in place for the two pupils who do not speak English as their first language.

42. Provision for careers education is good. There is good access to sufficient impartial advice. Careers education features satisfactorily in the overall personal, social and health education curriculum.
43. Pupils' views on a range of issues are effectively sought through the system of year councils and student forums, as well as specific surveys such as on bullying and the environment. The school listens to and acts on suggestions well. Following an idea put forward through the school council, for example, it is introducing an academic awards evening to complement the valued sports award evening so that a wider range of achievement can be celebrated.

Sixth form

44. Support and guidance are very good. Arrangements for transfer and induction into the sixth form are good, and good attention is also paid to transfer from Year 12 to Year 13. Sixth form tutors and subject staff work very well to monitor their students' progress with the result that any difficulties are picked up quickly. Students are encouraged very successfully to take responsibility for monitoring and reviewing their own progress. They also have the opportunity to work through their own support and careers programme using materials available on the sixth form's impressive website. They greatly appreciate the support and guidance provided for them, including on university applications, and although a small number would like more advice on what they should do after they leave school, this is very good. Students' views have been extensively sought as part of the sixth form's recent focus on teaching and learning styles. Students play a full part in the running of the sixth form through a range of committees. They were consulted on and involved in the development of the new sixth form block, for instance.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are satisfactory with some good features. Links with the community are good and with schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides parents with good information and they support their children's learning well.
- The school's very good links with other schools, colleges and universities have a positive effect on transfer arrangements into Year 7 and on provision in Years 10 to 13.
- There are some very good links with businesses and external agencies which benefit the vocational curriculum and the support provided for pupils.

Commentary

45. The school uses a good variety of communication methods to inform parents about life in the school and how well their children are doing. These include printed booklets, a regular newsletter, an extensive website, parent workshops, individual letters, telephone calls and face-to-face contact. In the pre-inspection questionnaire completed at the end

of last term, a small but significant number of parents said they did not feel well informed about their children's progress. Inspectors found that the school provides a good number of opportunities for parents to be kept informed, such as interim reports and an annual session with the form tutor focused on target-setting. This is in addition to the traditional evening to see subject teachers, which a few parents feel is not as well organised as it could be. Annual reports have improved since the last inspection: they now provide a good level of detail about pupils' progress in most National Curriculum subjects, although information is still limited in history, geography and religious education in Years 7 to 9. Parents make an effective contribution to their children's education, by ensuring pupils' regular attendance, for example, and by providing transport so that pupils can take part in extra-curricular sports and music activities. There is a small but active Parent Teacher Association, which raises useful funds towards the school's resources. A minority of parents do not feel that the school seeks their views. Inspectors found that the school does conduct surveys on particular issues among samples of parents and last year it tried to involve a small number of parents in discussing themes raised by the pupils in their discussion forums.

46. Links with primary schools have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good in some areas of the school's work. The arrangements for transfer from Year 6 to Year 7 are well organised with particularly close liaison taking place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs settle in smoothly. The school invites primary school headteachers and Year 6 teachers to visit their former pupils and monitor with staff the extent to which pupils' progress has been maintained following transfer. It provides highly-valued support and expertise to primary schools in ICT and physical education. Some departments are better than others in forging links with primary schools that enable them to build on what pupils have already learned. There are good examples of this work in science, mathematics and art. On the other hand, the English department has not made as much use as it might have done of the information gained in the 'bridging project' which pupils undertake at the end of Year 6 and the beginning of Year 7. This has contributed to the slower rate of achievement in English in Years 7 and 8, but is being remedied by the new head of English. The school works very well with other secondary schools and colleges in the area to provide joint 'challenge' days for pupils, joint training for staff and individual placements for pupils at risk of disaffection. The very effective link with Northampton College enables the school to offer two Applied GCSEs in art and design and ICT.
47. Partnership procedures are good on behalf of pupils with special educational needs. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about the progress made by their child, for example, by regular reviews and target setting for future provision. The school has very good links, used well, with external agencies that provide the support for certain pupils with additional special educational needs, and also – when needed – for those who do not speak English as their first language.
48. The school makes good use of local businesses and speakers in activities, such as the 'Business Enrichment' and the 'Science at Work' days to raise pupils' awareness of how their learning relates to real-life situations and can develop into a career. It also works well with external agencies to enhance the support provided for pupils, such as counselling services and those relevant to pupils with additional special educational

needs. Community links in music remain strong but those in religious education are more limited than they were at the last inspection. There are few opportunities for adults in the wider community, apart from primary school teachers, to benefit from the Technology College status of the school. The school is aware that this is an area for improvement and is appropriately developing its capability to be a centre for learning over the Internet.

Sixth form

49. Partnerships are good in the sixth form. Parents are involved well through the requirement that they sign a three-way contract with the school and their children. They are kept informed every half-term about their children's progress, as are the students themselves. The sixth form works well with other schools and colleges to provide some joint provision of specialist courses so that students in the area can follow the courses they wish to. Links with businesses to support the vocational courses are very good, as they are with Leicester University to extend students' experiences in science. Links with other universities help to raise students' aspirations, including for Oxbridge, and to enhance their ability to make successful applications. The school's good links with primary schools provide valuable opportunities for sixth form students to undertake coursework projects and to develop personal skills when helping run sports events. There are plenty of links with the local community, such as local business running workshops, to support technology subjects.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher gives very good leadership and is well supported by senior managers, heads of departments and pastoral managers

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher gives very good leadership.
- The sixth form is very well led and managed.
- The senior management team shows very good sense of purpose in its line management.
- Pastoral teams are very effectively led, but could communicate more rapidly with parents when dealing with bullying.
- The very strong commitment to inclusion is very well realised in practice.
- Induction and professional development of staff are very good.
- The profile of the specialist school status could be improved.

Commentary

50. Leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher gives very good leadership and has high aspirations for its success in continuing to achieve standards well above average, reflected in the Guilsborough mission statement 'striving for excellence'. She also has very good vision for the future in the development of e-learning in the school, which is currently a major focus. As befits its status as a technology college, the school is taking a lead in this locally, and aspects of the sixth form website, for example, have been adopted by the local authority and made available to

other schools. The headteacher also recognises that the profile of its specialist school status could be improved by more attention to displays relating to design and technology and science, in particular, in order to give pupils ideals to which to aspire, and to increase the take-up of advanced studies of these subjects in the sixth form. The head of sixth form also leads this area very well and has high expectations of students, who respond by showing a mature and responsible attitude to their studies and duties in the school.

51. The senior management team show a very good sense of purpose in their line management of subject departments, with regular and effective reviews, which lead to improvement in practice and to pupils' achievement. In some departments, there is insufficient focus on monitoring teachers' marking. The pastoral teams are led very effectively, and despite some parents' misgivings before the inspection, showed that they have efficient and effective methods for dealing with bullying, though they could ensure that communication with parents about action and outcomes is speedier.
52. The governing body is satisfactory. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and are very supportive. They offer good challenge to the headteacher and senior management team and designated governors for special educational needs, finance and curriculum carry out their duties well. The Technology College committee is conscientious in meeting its responsibilities and ensures that all funding is appropriately deployed and distributed to the school and the community. The Technology College ethos, though satisfactorily apparent through display of excellent work in the design and technology department, in particular, and reflected in the mission statement, is not given sufficient prominence in the school as a whole. The school does not have as high a take-up of advanced design and technology subjects as might be expected for its status. The governing body has not ensured that statutory requirements are met for ICT in Years 10 and 11, and it does not follow best practice in consultation by conducting an annual survey to find out the views of the whole parent body, though 'exit polls' are regularly used at parents' consultation meetings.
53. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is exceptionally well led. The staff team manage a wide range of key roles very well, such as liaison with subject departments. This is one reason why subject departments serve the needs of pupils with special educational needs better than is usual in most schools. A key strength underpinning the very effective leadership is the thoroughness of the co-ordinator. Governors allocate extra funds beyond the sum delegated from the local education authority. The school gains good value for money from this investment.
54. The school development plan is a good working document, devised by the whole staff and governing body. Although this results in a relatively large number of issues, some are department specific and are dealt with satisfactorily through department review and evaluation. The three main themes running through - assessment for learning, e-learning, and developing the school's role as a training school - are being tackled by all departments and curriculum areas. These areas of focus are all developing well; the school has invested soundly in ICT equipment, especially in the new sixth form area, and the website provides a rapidly developing tool to assist learning, such as in geography

and in the sixth form. However, there is insufficient access to hardware to enable all departments to meet their statutory requirements in ICT in Years 10 and 11.

55. Assessment for learning is developing well, particularly in the collection and use of data to monitor progress. This is well developed in the sixth form and is now permeating the main school in Years 10 and 11, with trials in Year 8. The 'traffic light' system of red, amber and green to denote pupils' level of understanding identifies students and pupils whose achievement based on their prior attainment is as expected, or above or below. This enables the school to identify underachievement and put in measures to improve it. Similarly, it provides extension and enrichment work for those who are doing particularly well. It is for this reason that achievement in the school is good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in many subjects in the sixth form.
56. The school's third major focus is its work as a training school. The continuing professional development of staff is very good; much training is done in-house which effectively shares the school's expertise. Performance management is well established across the whole staff and a coordinated team of senior managers runs the various aspects of the system. As well as those for support staff and for academic staff, there is a separate system for heads of year. The findings from these pastoral reviews are used to set the agenda and direct the focus for the off-site pastoral meetings held twice a year. The school has a very strong commitment to staff development and improvement and has set up exit interviews to further inform its approach to professional development. There is a wide range of training opportunities for all staff, such as research projects, training for middle managers and peer observation, to spread good practice.
57. Very good support is offered to newly-qualified teachers and to new staff, including supply teachers, through a support programme which starts before the teachers join the school and continues throughout their first year of employment. The school offers a range of placements for student teachers and students from the SCITT programme have joined the school as permanent teachers over the last few years. Despite the problems with staffing in recent years, the school has made efforts to recruit high quality staff to the school. Workload arrangements are in place through the provision of administrative support for departments, the appointment of supervisors to cover lessons and of non-teaching staff to carry out roles such as daily cover.
58. The school managers create effective teams; staff work well together under good and often very good leadership in departments. The very strong commitment to inclusion is seen in all the school's work. Pupils and students are included in all the work of the school, irrespective of gender or ethnic group, and have equal opportunity to succeed. Subject and pastoral heads provide good role models to staff and pupils alike, enabling them to copy good practice. Heads of department are invariably good teachers who share their expertise through lesson observations and department meetings.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,048,288	Balance from previous year	286,600

Total expenditure	4,568,188
Expenditure per pupil	3,613

Balance carried forward to the next	480,100
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59. Financial management is very good. The school has been prudent in setting aside funds to complete the sixth form block, laboratories and ICT rooms which are now being used by students and purchase resources for them. The governing body, headteacher and bursar focus on educational priorities identified in the school development plan and targets on the Technology College development plan. The school runs very efficiently and adheres very well to the principles of best value, except for the consultation element: governors do not involve all parents fully every year, although the school does operate exit polls at parents' meetings. All Technology College funding is directed appropriately. The sixth form is slightly subsidised by the main school funding but this is in order to maintain subjects, such as modern foreign languages, with a low take-up in this rural comprehensive where students have no viable alternative choice of school unless they have transport. The school gives good value for money.

Sixth form

60. The sixth form is very well led and managed, again reflecting the 'striving for excellence' mission. Governance of the sixth form is satisfactory. Leadership is characterised by very good vision for future development and an innovative approach to evaluation of provision. A good example of this is the setting up of focus groups whereby students, together with an observing teacher, frankly evaluate a lesson that has just been taught. The innovative use of the school's website supports students' learning thoroughly; the use of the traffic light tracking system for students' progress is now being used in Years 10 and 11 and tested in Year 8.
61. Leadership of the curriculum is very good, as is teaching, particularly in Year 13. The sixth form website is being very well developed as a tool for learning and for personal development. Students' leadership qualities are developed well so that they take responsibility, for example, for the school council, charity committees and peer mentors. The attention to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a particular strength of personal development. The 'Excellence in Moral Values' programme is also having a significant impact now since it, too, has been adopted in the main school.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by the end of Years 9 and 11, and achievement in Years 10 to 11 is good.
- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 has been inconsistent because of insufficient progress during Year 7, but is satisfactory overall.
- Teaching is good and pupils are learning well in all years.
- Leadership is good with many measures to improve attainment across the school, including Year 7.
- There is some inconsistency of teaching amongst new staff at this early stage in the academic year.

Commentary

62. For some years, standards in National Curriculum testing have been above the national average. In 2003, they fell to be in line with the national average, and were low in comparison with similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining the expected level remained above the national average, but the percentage at higher levels was below. The 2004 test results were much improved because of measures put in to improve attainment of higher ability pupils.
63. Pupils enter Year 7 with above average attainment. Their achievement is satisfactory to reach standards which remain above average at the end of Year 9. However, achievement during Years 7 to 9 has been inconsistent, with pupils making insufficient progress in Year 7. This has been a major weakness, particularly for those of higher ability, because it is inhibited by re-learning skills in which they are already competent and experienced. Parents identified this at the pre-inspection meeting. This is now being addressed, and in the first two weeks of this new academic year, work is already more challenging. In Year 8, the rate of progress improves, and by the end of Year 9, it is good.
64. Current standards in Year 9 are above average. The provisional test results for 2004, which have been subject to a re-mark, indicate that the percentage of pupils at the higher levels has once again risen to be at least above the national average for 2003, the most recent year for which comparative information is available. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys with no narrowing of the gap over a number of years.

65. In 2003, results in English GCSE examinations were well above average for pupils attaining grades A*-C and A* and A. The attainment of girls was better than that of boys. The provisional results for 2004 indicate that attainment at grades A*-C was above the 2003 national average while the A* and A grades remained well above. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average and pupils are achieving very well.
66. The quality of teaching is good; some very good teaching was seen. In the most successful lessons, teachers plan well to provide a good variety of learning activities, maintaining pupils' interest and concentration throughout lessons. Teachers make good use of questioning and discussion to offer pupils additional challenge, and they respond by thinking hard and extending their progress. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves so they feel confident to express their ideas and uncertainties. Teachers and teaching assistants take effective measures to meet the learning needs of individuals, but teachers sometimes confuse learning objectives and activities to be carried out. Pupils become uncertain about the purpose of the lesson, and this has an adverse effect on achievement. In general, the quality of marking is good and makes a clear contribution to pupils' understanding, but at the beginning of the academic year, there is inconsistency in the carrying out of assessment procedures.
67. The leadership of the department is good and the quality of management is satisfactory. The recently-appointed head of department has established an ethos of teamwork and cooperative endeavour amongst the teachers, most of whom are also recent appointments. They share a commitment to raising standards and achievement, with generally high aspirations for all pupils. The head of department has clearly identified and appropriately addressed key areas for development. The drop in standards in National Curriculum testing in 2003 has been effectively analysed and a range of measures put in place. The provisional results for 2004 show that these have been effective. The reasons for the disparity between the attainment of boys and girls have been similarly addressed and there is a wide range of measures in place to raise boys' attainment. There are new policies for assessment in place, which will need to be monitored with the changes in teaching staff.
68. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards remain well above average by Year 11, and there has been some improvement in the overall quality of teaching. Progress in the monitoring of the consistency and effectiveness of the assessment of pupils' work has been insufficient. The rate of progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 has not been accelerated until the current term when there are now signs of improvement. Nevertheless, this still has to be fully addressed until improvement in the work of pupils in Years 7 and 8 is secure.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. Standards of literacy in other subjects of the curriculum are good and develop well throughout Years 7 to 9, in particular. The National Strategy for improvement in these years is being well applied. In nearly all subjects, most pupils' spoken and written skills give them access to the curriculum and the ability to explore it well. In some subjects, such as history, these skills make a significant contribution to the high grades. Pupils are

offered good opportunities to use discussion and, for example, in art and science, they respond to these with developing articulation. Across the attainment range, pupils are given good opportunities to record their knowledge and understanding in written form, and in a wide range of subjects, lower ability pupils receive additional support to do this by using special frameworks which help them to plan what they want to write. There are some striking examples of pupils making very effective use of a range of forms of writing. A group of physical education pupils, for example, who plan a sports day for primary schools, write letters and compile plans for the day very effectively. However, in some subjects, teachers do not pay sufficient attention to literacy in their marking. Mistakes go uncorrected and opportunities for pupils to make additional progress are missed. Nearly all pupils meet the demands of their subjects for reading, including Internet research, and few have limited access to the curriculum because their reading is not good enough.

70. There is a thorough, detailed literacy policy, which sets high aspirations for the role of teachers of all subjects in the development of pupils' literacy. The staff received appropriate training in the teaching of literacy through their subjects.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning a foreign language.
- There is a wide range of curricular and enrichment language opportunities.
- The department has a clear vision of its priorities for improvement.
- Boys' performance is well below that of girls' in GCSE German and French.
- Marking is not consistent and does not always give pupils guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

71. In 2003, GCSE results in French were above the national average, with girls' performance well above average. In German GCSE, results were below the national average. However, the results for 2004 show a decline in results in French and a rise in those in German, representing a fluctuation in standards due to increased emphasis on raising standards in German, particularly for boys, through revised schemes of work. Based on 2003 teacher assessments, standards at the end of Year 9 in French and German were broadly in line with national expectations. In 2004, the standards are close to the national average.
72. Current achievement in both French and German is satisfactory. In most lessons, boys achieve as well as girls, particularly in speaking activities and where they are managed well. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but a lack of support in some lessons leads to underachievement. Higher ability pupils make good progress, are developing increasingly complex language structures and take a pride in the quality of their work.

73. Overall, the quality of teaching in French and German is satisfactory but variable across the department. Where teaching is good or better, it is characterised by the use of challenging questions, a wide range of teaching methods, including individual whiteboards and lively presentations, which inspire and captivate pupils. Excellent and very good lessons were seen in French and German, and pupils' understanding of the foreign language was developed constantly in these. In a Year 10 French lesson, for example, pupils responded promptly, accurately and with good accents to questions in French. They were clearly used to this approach and, where they did make errors, they were able to correct themselves. Achievement was good or better in these lessons. In the satisfactory and unsatisfactory lessons, the pace is slow and in some lessons the activities do not match the level of the pupils. As a result, pupils do not make sufficient progress, they become disinterested and some misbehave, and achievement is unsatisfactory.
74. Leadership is good in French and German. The head of department, together with the second in department, has a clear vision for the priorities for improvement for the department and has already put in successful measures to improve standards in German. The department enriches pupils' experiences of language through visits abroad, opportunities for work experience abroad and the use of two foreign language assistants. In addition, there are extra classes for able linguists and this year the department has introduced Latin GCSE to complement the modern foreign languages. Management of the department is satisfactory. The monitoring of teaching is frequent and support is given to staff as identified by the monitoring, which is both formal and informal, but the sharing of good practice and improving areas of weakness is not yet rigorous enough to ensure that all pupils achieve well through good teaching. Marking is inconsistent, lacks detail and does not give sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve their written work and move to the next level. Schemes of work in German have been revised and are very thorough; those in French lack sufficient detail.
75. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Improvements have been made in the development of assessment policies and the use of National Curriculum levels in planning. However, the quality of teaching is still variable and standards remain the same.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in all years are well above average.
- Due to the impact of the National Numeracy Strategy, standards have risen and teaching and learning have improved.
- Teaching and learning are very good and, as a result, pupils achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and the high calibre of teaching staff are strong features of the mathematics department.

- Assessment information is good but not fully used to improve the quality of teaching and learning further.
- There is insufficient use of lesson observation to monitor classroom practice rigorously.
- The use of ICT in lessons is underdeveloped, but there is some good use of interactive whiteboards.

Commentary

76. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003 were well above average, both when compared with all schools nationally and schools with similar prior attainment. The results in 2004 are similar. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, results are also well above the national average and in 2004, these showed significant improvement. Standards have risen as a result of better teaching and learning, and with the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. In particular, this has led to improved continuity in teaching and learning in Year 7 to ensure that good progress is made during the transition to secondary school. Better provision for GCSE revision classes targeting C/D border line pupils has also led to an improvement in GCSE results.
77. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in all years are consistent with test and examination results and are well above average. However, the standard of presentation of work in some of the books seen did not always reflect above average standards. Achievement by Year 9 and Year 11 is very good overall and there is no difference between how well boys and girls achieve. Gifted and talented pupils in Years 8 and 9 achieve very well because they are taught in express groups. This enables high challenge, fast pace and accelerated progress. Effective support is provided by teaching assistants for lower ability pupils and those with special needs. This contributes well to their achievement.
78. Teaching and learning are very good. Consequently, pupils achieve very well. Teachers have considerable specialist subject expertise and plan lessons with clear learning objectives that are explained to pupils. Expectations of pupils are high and in the majority of lessons seen, pace was very good. There is good balance of explanation and challenge with well-developed questioning techniques. Relationships with pupils are very good and behaviour is effectively managed. As a result, pupils respond well in lessons, make good oral contributions and are engaged in learning. In the best lessons seen, the use of open-ended questions enabled pupils to explain answers confidently and share ideas during discussion, making very good use of mathematical terminology. Some very good examples of pupils' work were seen with praise and clear advice on how to improve. Good assessment procedures are used to determine pupils' attainment and the department is beginning to use assessment information to improve teaching, but overall, this is not yet developed sufficiently.
79. The use of interactive whiteboards to stimulate pupils' interest and involve them in learning has recently been introduced into lessons. However, whilst there is some effective use of these, the full potential of this new technology is not being completely realised. The department has also developed a very good website for use by parents and pupils. Apart from these developments, there is limited use of ICT in lessons. This is due to the inability of whole classes to access computer facilities.

80. The quality of curriculum leadership is very good and the management of the department is good. The head of department has clear vision and is working well with a very well qualified and committed team of teachers to raise standards. There is a great deal of support for colleagues and the sharing of good practice constantly takes place, both in formal and informal settings. Although procedures are in place to monitor teaching and learning, there is insufficient lesson observation to ensure rigorous evaluation of classroom practice. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have improved through better teaching and learning. Work in Year 7 is now more closely matched to pupils' needs. Pupils' mental skills and calculating strategies have improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

81. Opportunities for using and applying mathematics across the curriculum are clearly identified. This is helping to develop pupils' ability to transfer mathematical skills to other areas and is effective in contributing to the quality of learning in other subject areas. In geography, for example, pupils demonstrate good data handling skills, which enhances their understanding of the subject. In science, the use of graphical skills is not as strong as other aspects of numeracy. There is good liaison between mathematics and other departments on choice of methods, particularly when they are introduced into teaching programmes.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results at the end of Year 11 are well above average.
- Most pupils work hard and are keen to learn.
- Pupils' achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 as a result of well-structured and engaging teaching.
- A previous lack of continuity in teaching in Key Stage 3, which caused standards to decline, is now being addressed effectively.
- Too little use is made of investigative work to develop pupils' scientific understanding.

Commentary

82. In 2003, standards in the Year 9 tests were well above the national average. When compared with pupils' prior attainment, results were in line with national expectations. Boys' performance was similar to that of girls. Results in 2004 were lower than in 2003, particularly for boys.
83. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above the national average. Boys' results were better than those of girls, although a greater percentage of girls achieved the highest grades. In 2004, results were higher than in 2003. Girls'

performance particularly improved and was better overall than that of boys. However, the percentage of boys achieving A* & A grades increased considerably.

84. From work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils by Year 9 is above the national average. Many have good subject awareness and use scientific models well to link different aspects. However, achievement in Years 7 to 9 overall is just satisfactory because pupils enter the school with above average attainment and have been coasting in Years 7 and 8, in particular. The progress of a considerable minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not as high as might be expected. They have weaknesses in some of the work previously covered in Years 7, 8 and 9, which causes them to lack confidence and to be rather unresponsive. This applies particularly to boys. There is also evidence in pupils' books of poor presentation and gaps in their work. This has arisen from problems last year in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced teachers to cover vacancies, which were made worse by the long-term absence of the head of department. Previous inadequacies in teaching also help to explain the decline in the Year 9 test results in 2004. The staffing difficulties have now been resolved and teaching is effective. Learning in lessons is improving. Pupils in Year 7 are enjoying their new school experience and achieving well.
85. Standards seen in Year 11 are well above average. Most pupils have a very good understanding of scientific principles, which they use appropriately. Whilst a few lack detailed knowledge of aspects of the work and confuse scientific terms, the majority of both boys and girls achieve well. This is because they respond well in lessons and learn effectively from the good teaching they receive. Last year, the school ensured that Years 10 and 11 classes were taught by more experienced teachers, which underpinned the improvements in the 2004 GCSE results and explains why standards are higher in the current Year 11.
86. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs receive well-focused support and achieve well, as do higher ability pupils, who respond very well to effective teaching.
87. Teaching is good; some very good teaching was seen, and all the lessons were at least satisfactory. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to structure and deliver the work. Planning is good. Pupils are involved well in lessons and are helped to learn through interesting and stimulating activities. Practical activities are employed well to develop skills, although there is sometimes too little attention given to developing individual pupils' understanding. At times, teachers rely too much on verbal description. Pupils may benefit from more visual presentations, including the use of ICT, which at present is under-utilised in the department. In particular, although GCSE coursework is of a good standard, limited emphasis is placed on investigational activities to encourage them to think for themselves and to develop independent ways of working.
88. Not having a permanent head of department for some 18 months has limited progress in the subject. The hard work of teachers and technicians has ensured that management is effective on a day-to-day basis. A new head of department has now been appointed and he, together with a very committed team of staff, has already increased the capacity for

improvement. A priority will be to ensure that the development plan is updated and used to monitor the work of the department in a more focused way.

89. Despite the difficulties encountered in leadership and teaching, there has been good progress since the last inspection. Standards in GCSE examinations have continued to improve, the quality of teaching is better, accommodation has been upgraded, and Year 7 lessons now concentrate more on what pupils have learned previously.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory** overall and good in examination classes.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department has achieved very good GCSE results.
- Not all pupils meet their entitlement to experience with computers in Years 10 and 11.
- The school is well provided with computers.

Commentary

90. The school's full GCSE results in the subject in 2003 were very good, with over 90 per cent of candidates reaching or passing the target grade C. This is far better than the national average and far better than the previous year's figures, both around 60 per cent. More pupils entered GCSE in 2004, but, as the school has asked for coursework re-marking, the results are not yet available.
91. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of levels of subject skills, knowledge and understanding; their overall standards are close to the national average. Most come in with a good grasp of the basic skills of using a computer and of word processing, though most find it very hard to grasp the concept of networking and a few do not know how or why to select text for processing.
92. At the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Teachers assess pupils' grasp of ICT as a subject, as a tool for supporting learning in other areas of the curriculum, and as a skills area. In recent years, this assessment has shown at least three-quarters of pupils reaching the target Level 5 - always above or well above the national average, far better than when the school was previously inspected. By this stage, most pupils have become much more fluent with word-processing and quite competent with spreadsheets, database work, and using the Internet and email effectively. Thus, during Years 7 to 9, most pupils make good progress and achieve well in most aspects of the subject, especially if they do not have to share computers. This is true of girls and boys, and of pupils with special educational needs. Indeed, some of the latter make better progress in their use of computers than most of their peers.

93. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, only a minority of pupils have the opportunity to make enough use of computers and communications to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Most of those do so in the GCSE course in the subject, though the department also offers an applied GCSE, and some pupils on business studies courses choose the ICT option. Most on such courses continue to grow in their appreciation of what computers and communications can do for them and for society as a whole. Some become very able users and readily find a range of possible solutions to an information-handling problem. They choose appropriately, develop, evaluate, and improve.
94. Most pupils on courses in the subject have positive attitudes that are maintained from Year 7 onwards. They are motivated to study and to learn, and often do more work than their teachers ask of them. As a result, they learn fast as individuals, but classes are large and pupils sometimes have to share computers without being encouraged to work together effectively.
95. Overall, the quality of ICT teaching throughout the main school is good – much improved since the previous inspection. The teaching in well over a third of lessons observed was very good. Lessons are well planned and fast moving and the teachers expect the pupils to work hard in lessons and at home. In Years 10 and 11, teachers also have some success in tailoring what they expect to the particular needs of individual pupils. The department's assessment systems are good, and much improved since the previous inspection, but pupils in Years 7 to 8 are not aware of how well they are doing and how they can do better.
96. The subject head has worked hard to improve provision in lessons. In Years 7 and 8, the timetable offers two periods a week in the subject – one for ICT skills and the other as a technology-based lesson applied to designing and solving problems that involve information. At present, the links between the two courses are not strong because the courses come from two different departments. Pupils' work is less comprehensive and productive than it could be, as a result.
97. The head of department's aim is that every pupil reaches the end of Year 11 with a useful qualification in ICT. All Year 9 pupils start a course that can lead to a short GCSE; this is new, so cannot yet be assessed. In Years 10 and 11, an increasing number of pupils work towards full GCSE, and an applied course is fast gaining popularity. Work in the department is well led and managed, with formal and informal systems for monitoring and improving the teachers' and pupils' work; relationships are very good. The subject head is strong at sharing responsibilities with colleagues, and consults appropriately.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

98. For its size, the school has an above average supply of computers for teaching and learning, though there are as yet no class sets of laptops able to be used as required around the site. There are three rooms fitted with enough computers for most full classes. However, these are booked for specific ICT lessons almost all week, and normally only one is open at lunchtime for people to drop into. For such reasons, work in a number of subject areas is more constrained than the staff, pupils and parents would like. One of the

main business studies rooms, for instance, is next to a computer suite, but these classes hardly ever gain access. Although teachers are hampered by lack of access, in some subjects, such as geography, e-learning is developing very well.

99. Only in design and technology, which has its own full-sized suite as well as a separate half-class facility, is the use of computers and communications embedded throughout the main school. Indeed, this subject provides its own applied ICT lesson for all classes in Years 7 and 8 (though sometimes using other teachers and other rooms). There are also many interactive whiteboards around the school. Though these are often used only as data projector screens, there is some very good practice, for instance, in mathematics, where their true function is being better developed.
100. Although similar observations were made in the previous inspection report (and in a recent local authority review), the school is only now starting to explore how best to meet pupils' needs with ICT. Staff skills have been audited and various training opportunities are becoming available; a survey of practice in the subject areas has begun in preparation for mapping against needs, coordination and focused development.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Support for learning through the geography section of the school's web site is excellent.
- Study guides for GCSE classes are very good.
- Good teaching stimulates pupils to do their best.
- Marking is inconsistent in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use assessment data in tracking their own progress.

Commentary

101. Pupils enter the school from a large number of primary schools displaying wide-ranging levels of skill in geography. Overall, the standard on entry is in line with national expectations. At the end of Year 9, standards are above national expectations. At the end of Year 11, they are well above average. In 2003, standards were above average at GCSE, and in 2004, were well above the average of 2003. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, particularly of boys.
102. Teaching and learning are good overall with no unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection. Lessons that offered pupils a range of activities in which the pace was brisk and where there were opportunities for independent learning were most successful. Very good lessons were observed in which careful attention was given to the learning styles that were most successful for different groups of pupils and this approach was most successful in raising the achievement of boys. Teacher-dominated lessons and

those that lacked pace were less successful in meeting the range of learning needs in the class.

103. Marking is conscientiously completed but the marking policy is not implemented consistently. Assessment is good in providing accurate measures of attainment but assessment data are not used sufficiently to enable pupils to track their own progress and to help them identify the steps that they need to take to progress further. The use of ICT by teachers is very good, although pupils did not use ICT during the inspection. However, good examples of pupils' work were seen, especially in GCSE coursework.
104. Leadership and management of the department are good. A comprehensive and up-to-date faculty handbook is in place and schemes of work are clear and adapted to meet the range of students' needs. Assessment procedures are effective in producing accurate measures of attainment but the outcomes of assessment are not used sufficiently to enable pupils to plan the steps they need to take to improve further. Field work opportunities that are local and accessible to all are provided. Monitoring of the curriculum delivery through the humanities programme in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory in ensuring that all pupils receive their entitlement to individual subjects if they are absent, for example.

Example of outstanding practice in the management of learning resources:

Meticulous planning and detailed attention to differing learning styles have been built into a range of excellent website-based materials.

The whole of the GCSE geography course is posted on the school's website, including homework assignments and study guides. Links to many other sources of information and aids to learning are provided and particular attention is given to the preferred learning styles of individual pupils, with concepts and information being presented in many different forms. Detailed printed study guides are provided for each pupil and these are used in conjunction with the web-based materials. The availability of this wealth of information that can be reached from school or from home has proved to be very successful in raising achievement, especially that of boys. To replicate this good practice, a teacher would need to develop their ICT skills and pay particular attention to the preferred learning styles of their pupils.

105. There are enough books and teaching resources to support the excellent departmentally-produced study guides. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 and the GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend and pupils' performance at GCSE is now particularly good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good results and achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11.
- Well above average teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, representing good achievement.
- Monitoring of pupils' work is a weakness in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- More attention needs to be paid to the presentation and marking of work in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Commentary

106. GCSE results in 2003 were above average. The performance of girls was well above average whilst that of boys was average. In 2004, the results of the boys matched the high standards of the girls. These results represent very good achievement by pupils whose performance exceeds predicted grades. Results of teacher assessment in Year 9 were well above average. This represents good achievement by pupils who were of above average ability when they entered the school. Current attainment is above average and achievement good at the beginning of the school year.
107. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is best, teachers are knowledgeable, expect high standards of presentation and set challenging work. Pupils in one Year 9 class made very good progress using a variety of sources to understand changes that took place in agriculture in the 18th century. In another Year 9 class, the learning of less able pupils, in particular, was less secure because the task, understanding the location of industry, had not been matched to their abilities. Scrutiny of work reveals a range of approaches taken by teachers to topics, presentation, and the organisation and completion of work. Pupils' learning may benefit from a more uniform and coherent approach to ensure that all have access to the same history curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and set high standards and expectations through praise and encouragement. Work is very focused upon examination requirements without losing the excitement and interest of the topic covered. Pupils in Year 11 studying Kristallnacht were totally absorbed in a television programme and made sensitive and appropriate responses in discussing the issues the programme raised.
108. Leadership and management are satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, where history is taught as a separate subject, leadership and management are very good. In Years 7, 8 and 9, however, the management of the subject, taught as part of humanities, is less successful. Whilst the evaluation of teaching and the monitoring of pupils' work are well established, they are not sufficiently focused upon ensuring high standards in the teaching of history in all classes, which results in differences in achievement during lessons, shown by the quality of written work.
109. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The use of ICT is increasing but has still to make an impact on teaching and learning, and whilst high standards have been maintained in Years 10 and 11, the progress that pupils make is less secure in all classes in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement by Year 11.
- Good teaching.
- Good leadership and management.
- Marking does not do enough to help pupils improve their work.
- Insufficiently rigorous monitoring of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

110. In 2003, when the school entered all Year 11 pupils for the GCSE Short Course examination for the first time, the proportion gaining grades A*-C was broadly in line with the national average. In the 2004, examinations the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was higher, compared with the 2003 national data.
111. During the inspection week, there was insufficient evidence, for timetabling reasons, to judge standards of pupils by Year 9. Standards of pupils currently studying the GCSE Short Course are now above average, and achievement is good. Pupils have, for example, a good grasp of religious and secular responses to contemporary moral and social issues, and their interpretative, reflective and evaluative skills are well developed. Standards are rising because the course is becoming embedded, and pupils increasingly recognise its value.
112. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good overall, and was very good or excellent in many lessons. Where learning is strongest, teachers have a very good grasp of their subject, and clear aims, which they share and review with pupils. They plan very well to achieve their aims, stretching pupils with interesting and challenging activities and tasks, which are very well matched to their individual needs. Year 10 pupils, for example, made very good gains in understanding the challenges to Christian belief posed by the *Big Bang* theory of the origins of the universe. This was because they were led step by step, through skilled explanation and questioning, supported by challenging written and audio-visual resources, to grasp the origins of the theory in the discoveries of the singularities of Pulsars and Black Holes. Working in small groups, they then evaluated the theory's implications against the classic arguments for an act of creation in Aquinas's *First Cause* theory, brought alive through the construction of domino rallies.

113. Learning in the classroom is extended by meaningful homework, often using the innovative subject website as a resource. This good learning is underpinned by teachers' high expectations, and the excellent relationships they engender in the classroom. Boys and girls of all capabilities, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, can take risks in their learning, because they know that their teachers and peers will receive their contributions with respect. Where learning is less effective, day-to-day marking does not do enough to help pupils understand how to raise the standard of their work, or to improve their literacy.
114. The department is well led and managed by an enthusiastic and committed specialist teacher, who has done much to move the subject on. The excellent team ethos within the humanities faculty makes a positive contribution to standards, and does much to compensate for the continuing over-reliance on non-specialist teachers in Years 7 to 9.
115. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards are now very much higher because of significant improvements to the quality of teaching, to schemes of work, assessment procedures, learning resources, the use of ICT, and access to public examinations. Statutory requirements are now fully met in the main school. (They are also now met in the sixth form through the new GCE AS examination option, and the innovative "Making Meaning" programme for all students).

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in textiles and systems and control are very good.
- The range of specialisms in Years 10 and 11 is wide.
- Good use is made of ICT in pupils' work.
- Good relationships contribute to good learning.
- Monitoring is not rigorous enough for consistency of practice across the department.
- Design and communication skills are not developed in enough depth, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

116. The 2003 GCSE results were above average. Boys' results were well above average and girls' above average for A*-C grades. Over recent years, results have been consistently above average. In 2004, boys' performance was not as good as in previous years; girls' was similar to that in 2003.
117. Current standards in Year 9 are above average. Attainment on entry is average and all pupils make good progress and achieve well from Year 7 to Year 9. Good work is seen across all areas of the department, for example, the night light project in electronics and the note holder project in resistant materials. This work showed good understanding of

materials and components and good standards of presentation. Weaker work shows limited design skills, over-use of felt tip pens for colouring, drawings out of proportion and spelling errors. There is a tendency to use work sheets to excess and not engage students in developing graphical skills from an early age.

118. Current standards in Year 11 are well above average in textiles and systems and control, and broadly average in other specialisms. Overall, standards are above average. Achievement is good overall, with higher ability pupils achieving particularly well in some specialisms. The laptop alarm project in systems and control and the packaging exercise in food technology made good use of ICT in research and presentation, and showed good annotation and understanding of design constraints. In textiles, detailed research into materials and processes was seen in a project looking at clothing to be worn in a West End musical. Design folders in textiles have high standards of presentation. Where the work is not as good, it is mainly due to lack of detail in the research and development of ideas, poor annotation and untidy presentation. There are spelling errors in some of the work, including that of the better folders. Practical work is usually of a good standard and the use of computer-aided design (CAD) to model ideas is of a good standard. Girls' work is usually better than boys', particularly in their design folders. Literacy is good but some written work is untidy. There is good support of technical language in all lessons. Numeracy is satisfactory. Where ICT is used in pupils' work, it is mainly of a good standard.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In very good lessons, learning is increased because of the teaching styles used. Good subject expertise, good pace, good use of resources and good planning are some features of most lessons seen. Year 9 pupils used exemplar material when learning about product analysis, a Year 10 lesson made good use of ICT to research information for methods of fixing materials, and pupils in Year 11 evaluated existing products well and adapted findings in their own designs. Where lessons are only satisfactory, the pace may be slow, pupils are restless and the work lacks challenge. In most lessons, teachers use good questioning skills to involve pupils in the lesson and to reinforce learning.
120. The recently-appointed head of department is providing good direction for the subject and has addressed some of the issues from the last inspection. The use of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 as an aid to learning remains, and monitoring procedures for teaching and learning need a sharper focus. The head of department is managing a team of mainly experienced teachers well, a number of whom are part-time. Assessment procedures are mainly good but the department does not have a system of tracking pupils' progress easily. Marking is usually helpful and supportive but can be over generous at times. The development of design thinking skills is limited in some folder work and drawings are done in pen and not pencil, which can be untidy. The use of computer-aided design (CAD) and ICT in general to improve presentation is a good feature of the work, which contributes to the good work generally seen. Technician support is insufficient for a large department. Accommodation is good but not all in one area. Resources are good overall but there is a shortage of ICT equipment in food technology. A fast track group in Year 10 resistant materials is an innovative feature in the department. Display of technology work is not a strong feature in the school, despite its specialist Technology College status.

121. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved to above national expectations, GCSE results are now above average when they were well above at the last inspection. Assessment, including National Curriculum levels, is not always used to improve learning and monitoring teaching and learning is not fully implemented. Health and safety issues have been addressed. The capacity for further improvement is good under the leadership of the new head of department.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Music and art and design were inspected in full. Drama was sampled. At the end of Year 11, standards in drama are above the national average. Pupils develop good understanding of drama conventions and use these well in their performances. Speaking and characterisation are generally well developed, although in scripted work, not all pupils are sure of their words. Good use of symbolism and comedy was observed. Attainment in Year 8 was not as good, although this was due largely to pupils' lack of familiarity with the conventions of work in the drama studio. Teaching and learning are good and full of enthusiasm. Teachers have very good subject skills. Lessons are well planned and pupils are constantly encouraged to achieve the targets set for them. Praise is used well to encourage further efforts, although the teacher tends to dominate some appraisal sessions.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good specialist teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Relationships are very good. All pupils feel valued and well supported.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good assessment procedures and practices help pupils to know how to improve.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 produce very good quality work in sketchbooks.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The school provides insufficient opportunities for pupils to visit galleries and museums.

Commentary

122. Standards seen in Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Given that many pupils enter Year 7 with a wide disparity of prior experience in painting, ceramics, printmaking and three-dimensional work, this shows good achievement. Pupils effectively use a wide range of media, including graded pencils, fabrics and pigments, as well as modelling and construction materials. They develop good levels of technical vocabulary and use it appropriately when discussing their own work and that of established artists. They develop good cultural understanding through studying artists such as Klee, Picasso, Gaudi and Van Gogh and important movements such as Impressionism and Cubism. In lessons, pupils know exactly what is expected of them because teachers communicate

clearly their own high expectations and give constant, unambiguous verbal advice and guidance. This augments the useful written comments, which pupils receive in response to homework exercises and at the end of projects. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to generate and modify their own imagery using computers. During 'Enrichment Day', pupils in Year 9 made individual clay figures for a large-scale collaborative work based on Antony Gormley's 'Field' sculpture. This showed good practical skills in representing ideas in visual form.

123. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average and achievement is good. In 2003, 61, an average percentage of pupils, gained A*-C grades at GCSE. Early unvalidated indications are that these results were higher in 2004. The subject is gaining in popularity. Increasing numbers are choosing to study both the Fine Art course and the newly introduced vocational pathway provided by the Applied Arts course. This offers a double award and is more closely linked to the world of work and arts-related careers. Pupils make very good use of sketchbooks to complete homework tasks. They research the lives and times of artists from a wide range of cultures, ancient and contemporary, from which they develop ideas of their own to incorporate into paintings and sculptures. Pupils are articulate when critically evaluating their own practical work in relation to that of their selected artists. A few pupils use digital photography and the computers in the school's library to scan, modify and print imagery as a basis for their own work. Pupils following the vocational route enjoy an intensive five-day course, developing skills in ICT at Northamptonshire College, as part of the course requirements. The school offers insufficient opportunities for pupils to visit and observe at first hand works of art of national or international importance, in museums and galleries.
124. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. Teachers are very well qualified specialists. They provide very good role models for pupils, who, in turn, show appreciation and respect. Teachers create a welcoming, industrious workshop environment and teach skills on a step-by-step basis. This approach is especially successful for pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress and feel valued and well supported. Teachers constantly challenge pupils to accept more responsibility for their own learning. They encourage creative problem-solving. Most pupils can correct a misjudged line, colour application or composition and turn it into an expressive feature of their work. The shared technical assistant contributes well to the success of the subject. The quality and content of displays of work are good and effectively extend opportunities for learning throughout the school. Leadership is very good. Harmonious teamwork and very clear organisational strategies have had a positive impact on standards.
125. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. This is reflected in the school's Artsmark Silver Award. Improved policies, schemes of work and procedures for gathering assessment data are more detailed and better used by teachers to inform their lesson planning. A real effort is being made in the department to tackle boys' underachievement; they tend to attain lower grades. This is evident in the revised learning activities and new examination choices offered. This all contributes more effectively to pupils' progress. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy the subject and make similar good progress to their peers because teachers provide a welcoming

atmosphere, warm relationships and inclusive activities. This raises pupils' self-esteem and consequently, behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive.

Music

Provision in music is **very good** with some outstanding features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 11 are outstanding.
- Teaching and learning are always good and often very good.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Standards in the extra-curriculum are very good.
- More resources are needed to develop music technology in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

126. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above those seen for pupils of this age, with a significant minority achieving standards well above. Pupils develop a good all-round understanding of performing and composing in a variety of styles. Knowledge, understanding and use of musical terminology are also good and support the practical work. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have limited opportunities to use music technology. More resources are needed to develop skills in this area. Some lack of continuity in teaching last year has also affected standards for some. Pupils entering the school in Year 7 have a varied musical experience and their standards are broadly in line with national levels. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 is good.
127. Examination results in Year 11 are outstanding. Group sizes are just above average and over 90 per cent of pupils have achieved the higher grades in recent years. This is very high compared with the national average. In Years 10 and 11 composing standards are particularly good. In the last year, pupils have been able to make good use of music technology to enhance their skills in this element. Achievement is very good.
128. Teaching is very good overall; some outstanding lessons were also seen during the inspection. The learning experience for pupils is very positive, resulting in high standards of achievement. Younger pupils enjoy their lessons and work well; older ones are particularly well motivated and are developing independent learning skills. Lessons are very well structured and prepared with tasks of increasing difficulty which consolidate and extend pupils' learning. Tasks are varied; they are clearly explained and interest is sustained. Lively and enthusiastic teaching ensures a good response. Teachers ensure that pupils are all involved in their tasks and in question sessions. They are fully aware of the needs of their pupils and help them to succeed in their work. In the best lessons, an excellent learning environment is achieved through a variety of well-developed strategies. Subject knowledge is very good and teachers share their pleasure in music with their pupils.
129. Leadership and management are excellent. All areas of the department are carefully monitored and the subject leader has an excellent understanding of the strengths and needs of music. He ensures consistency in the department by revising work with classes

taught by less experienced teachers and helping them extend their own expertise. This is consolidated by the other teachers revising his lessons with the class. Plans are in place to introduce music technology into the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 as soon as the resources arrive.

130. The curriculum is very well planned for all ages. In Years 7 to 11, a suitably wide variety of musical styles are studied through performing, composing and listening, and detailed schemes of work have been developed. Each topic is accompanied by work booklets for the pupils and teaching books for the staff. Opportunities to enhance understanding of work-related learning are identified in the GCSE curriculum. Such thorough planning adds strength to the work of the department. The department also makes a well-planned contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Social skills are particularly well developed, and pupils in the bands make trips abroad. Assessment, which was criticised in the last inspection, is now equally thorough. It is embedded in each scheme of work and procedures are detailed. Good use is made of data to affect future planning and the department responds very well to pupil questionnaires. All areas of the department are very well monitored, with the emphasis on learning.
131. Lessons in all orchestral instruments, guitar, voice, keyboard and drums are also offered and the school supports these financially. In the extra-curricular activities, a variety of groups rehearses regularly, including an orchestra, wind band, steel band and jazz band, as well as many other contemporary rock bands. Standards in the instrumental lessons are good; work in extra-curricular groups is very good and much appreciated by the parents.
132. Since the previous inspection, the department has moved into new purpose-built accommodation and resources have been much improved. Technology has been introduced in Years 10 upwards, but more computers are needed to enable pupils lower down the school to have regular access to this. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. With more resources for music technology in place, this very good department will be well poised to move even further forward.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teamwork, leading to high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve.
- A high proportion of very good teaching.
- A strong commitment to continue to improve teaching and learning.
- Excellent links with primary schools.
- Very good arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting.
- Careful monitoring of teaching is required to focus on what pupils are learning and what they achieve.
- Opportunities for pupils to evaluate their performance and the performance of others during lessons need to be increased.

Commentary

133. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is about average. In gymnastics, pupils link movements in a sequence, but they are unable to maintain good body tension or posture. Current standards in Year 9 are above average. Pupils are able to pass and catch a ball with accuracy, control and speed. This represents good progress and pupils achieve well across Years 7 to 9.
134. By the time they reach Year 11, pupils' attainment is above average, and achievement is good. Pupils confidently take on a variety of roles such as umpire and coach. They readily accept decisions and guidance from their classmates. Pupils apply the skills they have learned to a game and develop good strategies and techniques to beat an opponent, for example, pivoting in netball and using disguise when serving in badminton. Those who follow examination courses continue to make good progress and attain high standards. They develop very good knowledge and understanding of how muscles work and the effect training has on improving performance.
135. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good with the result that pupils make good progress and achieve well. A significant proportion of teaching is very good. In the best lessons, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons that engage and sustain the interest, enthusiasm and commitment of the pupils. They ensure that skills are developed progressively; they tell pupils what they want them to do and how to achieve targets set for them. Pupils build carefully on what they can do, both in lessons and over time. In a rugby lesson, for example, tackling skills were carefully introduced and built up, with the result that by the end of the lesson, all pupils were able to tackle an opponent confidently under controlled conditions. In these lessons, teachers always ensure that the pace is brisk and that time is managed very well. There is always plenty of purposeful activity, to which pupils respond very well. Though some good questions were sometimes asked of pupils, they do not have enough opportunities to evaluate their performance and the performance of others during lessons. In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not explain clearly what needs to be done or how to achieve a particular target. In these lessons, pupils lose interest and make little progress.
136. Leadership and management are very good. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. Each of the issues contained in the report have been addressed, resulting in higher standards, better quality teaching, more opportunities for pupils to participate in a wider range of sports and activities, and much better links with primary schools. The department has worked well together in the pursuit of their objectives and have achieved what they have set out to do. All staff are hard-working, committed to the school and are keen to raise standards still further. They freely give up their time to provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including competitive sports fixtures against other schools. These have a positive impact on standards and on participation in the subject.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

A sample of business studies lessons in Years 10 and 11 was observed in the inspection. The quality of teaching and learning was good in all cases. Major strengths are the teachers' understanding of business, care for the pupils, pace in lessons, and variety of activities. These

ensure that almost all pupils enjoy what they meet and are determined to make good progress. Most of the classes are working hard towards GCSE, despite insufficient opportunity to use computers in school. There is also very good promise with a new home-grown "Enterprise" course for pupils who have withdrawn from languages.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Schemes of work are detailed, well-planned and well-organised.
- Assessment arrangements are good.
- Staff give high levels of involvement.

Commentary

137. Citizenship is taught by form tutors on a rolling programme throughout the week. There is a comprehensive, well-planned scheme of work in place supplemented by good resources to support teaching and learning. The school has recently achieved the local education authority's Gold Award for its provision.
138. Standards are above those expected for children this age by the end of Years 9 and 11 and achievement is currently satisfactory at this stage in the academic year. Pupils take pride in their written work; during lessons they discuss and debate issues with their teachers and with each other showing tolerance, respect and good cooperation. They develop a secure understanding of their role in society and put into practice around the school what they learn in lessons. The resultant atmosphere in classrooms, corridors and public places is purposeful and well-ordered.
139. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. However, both teachers and pupils were experiencing their first lesson of the year and were coming to terms with new material with which they were unfamiliar. Teachers know their pupils well and develop very good relationships with them. They personalise the content of the lessons thereby making it more relevant and meaningful. In the best lessons, teachers challenge pupils to achieve ambitious goals and organise tasks and activities to help them achieve them. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, where the theme was Tolerance, the class was organised into mixed gender pairs. The teacher first devised a series of questions to prompt pupils' thinking and then challenged them to make up their own before finally insisting that they talk to each to explain their responses.
140. All pupils develop their skills of communication, participation and responsible action through some aspects of school life. Pupils in the sixth form act as 'buddies' and mentors to pupils in Year 7 and help to ease their transition into the school. The well-established year group councils inform the whole school council of issues about which pupils are concerned. Pupils' views and opinions are sought through surveys and questionnaires,

for example, regarding the issue of bullying, and there is a rich and varied range of extra-curricular activities, some of which are chosen by pupils themselves. Though these make a valuable contribution to the development of citizenship, the school recognises that it could do more to develop pupils to be involved in the life of the school by giving them greater responsibilities.

141. Management of the subject is good. The subject leader has worked hard in consultation with her colleagues to plan and organise the scheme of work and has monitored its implementation. They recognised that changes needed to be made to the timetable to ensure that citizenship lessons were rotated throughout the week and this has come into effect this year.

Personal, health and social education

142. Personal, health and social education (PHSE) incorporates careers and citizenship. It is taught through a rolling programme of discrete lessons in all years, one lesson per week. Pupils achieve well and make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of appropriate topics, including healthy eating, drugs awareness and sex education.
143. The effectiveness of teaching in PHSE lessons observed was satisfactory or better. These lessons were the first of the year and pupils and form tutors were getting to know each other. The course is taught by form tutors who are not necessarily specialists in the topics but pupils also benefit from sessions from external agencies, from specialist teachers and from using quality resources.
144. The co-ordination of the work in PHSE lessons is undertaken by joint planning by the heads of year but heads of department are also involved so that work in some of the programmes can be extended in subject lessons. Heads of year are also responsible for monitoring, assessing and reviewing the programme and for training tutors. Clearer identification and better monitoring of the learning outcomes need to be made for each of the units taught to ensure that pupils cover the common curriculum.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 12 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	8	62.5	80.1	25	23.7	25	29.9
Biology	12	75	65.2	16.7	11.1	25	20.6
Business studies	9	88.9	76.4	33.3	16.3	34.4	26.2
Chemistry	5	80	72.7	40	13.9	34	24.1
Drama	1	100	86.5	0	19.6	40	30.6
English Literature	5	100	85.9	60	19.1	50	30.2
Design and technology	4	75	74.9	0	15.1	20	25.3
General studies	4	100	73.9	75	17.8	47.5	25.7
Geography	15	80	74.3	6.7	19.8	25.3	26.5
German	4	100	81.5	50	19.3	47.5	28.9
History	2	100	80.7	0	19.5	30	28.6
ICT	1	100	67	0	10.9	30	21.4
Mathematics	5	80	61.9	20	17.1	28	22.1
Music	3	100	86.5	33.3	21.4	33.3	30.7
Other social studies	19	73.7	69.7	10.5	16.7	24.7	24.1
Physics	4	100	68.6	0	14.4	30	22.7
Sociology	2	0	71.8	0	18.4	0	25.4
Sports/PE studies	7	100	73.2	14.3	11.4	27.1	23.1

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	100	98.6	50	50.2	85	87.5
Biology	13	100	96.4	30.8	39.2	78.5	78.6
Business studies	8	100	98.7	75	36.8	97.5	80.1
Chemistry	9	100	97.6	44.4	49	88.9	84.9
Communication Studies	2	100	99.4	0	37.8	80	82.1
Drama	8	100	99.5	37.5	40.1	85	83.6

English Literature	25	100	99.5	60	46.5	95.2	86.5
Design and technology	2	0	97.8	0	35	0	77.9
Geography	25	100	98.7	28	44.5	74.4	84
German	3	100	98.4	66.7	47.9	106.7	84.8
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
History	25	100	99	44	47.9	86.4	84.6
Mathematics	17	100	96.7	82.4	55.6	102.4	88.8
Other social studies	20	100	97.4	55	42.7	89	81.8
Physics	14	100	96.7	42.9	44.6	84.3	81.7
Sports/PE studies	12	100	98	16.7	30.9	70	75.2
Business VCE	14	100	65	51.9	14.6	89.6	60.1
Health and social care VCE	3	100	67.7	33.3	14.5	73.3	63.5
Information technology VQ	16	96.8	77.9	83.9	23.4	99.4	64.9
Leisure and tourism VCE	13	100	62.9	15.4	10.2	67.7	57.9
Travel and tourism VCE	7	100	71.8	14.3	14.5	68.6	62.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English was inspected in full. French was sampled in one Year 12 lesson. Teaching was good and students made good progress. During the lesson, the teacher provided support for the students and they responded with confidence and motivation. They are working well in the first few weeks of their studies and standards seen are in line with those expected for students who have achieved A* or A in their GCSE French.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Achievement is good, and procedures to monitor this are good.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very good.
- Teaching is very good.

Commentary

145. Standards at A-level in 2003 were well above the national average, with a high percentage of A and B grades and 100 per cent pass rate. The results for 2004, which are currently undergoing a re-mark for the entire entry, show a sharp decline of A and B grades. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are currently well above average. Achievement is good and students in Year 13 have made good progress in meeting the

considerable demands of the course. Those in Year 12 have made a very promising start to the course.

146. Students make particularly good progress in preparing and structuring their written assignments to produce well-argued and coherent answers. They make good use of the opportunities they are given to carry out independent research reading around the subject, especially the work of acclaimed literary critics, and in the independent investigation of sources of extra reading. They also make progress in the use of their developing appreciation of the contextual and critical background of their texts in order to form their own evaluations. Students develop an at least appropriate, and often very good, balanced and objective written style in order to present their ideas clearly.
147. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge which is used very effectively to support students and boost their confidence. Teachers have very high expectations and consistently offer a high level of challenge. Students respond very well to this by preparing themselves for lessons thoroughly and working and concentrating very hard to meet their teachers' expectations. They show a high level of engagement with the topics they study. Teachers make very good use of questioning and discussion. The level of discussion is demanding and promotes achievement very effectively. Teachers do not make sufficient use of discussion at the end of lessons to reinforce and summarise progress, partly because lessons are very intense and insufficient time is left for this. The very good relationships between students and teachers, including those who have been very recently appointed, ensure that all students have the confidence to make a full contribution to lessons.
148. Leadership is good and management of the subject satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has yet to give full consideration to this area, although the effectiveness of some measures is already evident. There are good procedures to monitor students' progress, especially during the early weeks of the course. This is particularly good practice in a subject which admits students whose previous attainment does not necessarily form a sound basis for continued study in the sixth form. The introduction of the moderation of marking by pairs of teachers offers good support to those who are less experienced.
149. Students speak very warmly of the quality of the support and guidance given to them by their English teachers. They are well satisfied with their choice of the subject for advanced study and a high percentage intends to study English at university. Students' very committed attitude to the subject is exemplified by the system they have set up, independently, to offer additional support to each other in responding to their texts and tackling their written assignments.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

150. The standard of literacy in the sixth form is very good. In most subjects, the compilation of useful notes forms a significant aspect of students' response and in some subjects, for example, psychology, this is a particular strength. In mathematics, students adapt notes independently in order to meet their own needs more precisely. History students use a wide range of literacy skills which are of high quality. In geography, students use these

skills very successfully to enhance their understanding. In a range of subjects, students make very good use of discussion to extend their knowledge and understanding. In one geography lesson, students used discussion to examine critically their growing understanding of the topic of urbanisation, while in psychology, students used their examination and discussion of the media to consolidate their understanding of issues surrounding crime.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- From very good leadership and teaching, standards at the end of Year 13 are well above average and student achievement is very good.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good and they are effectively supported by teachers.
- There are not enough opportunities for independent learning.

Commentary

151. A-level results in 2003 were well above the national average. In 2004, A-level standards were similar but no national comparative data are available. Standards in the 2003 AS examinations for the five students who terminated at the end of Year 12 were above average.

152. Standards of work seen on inspection are consistent with course expectation and recent examination results, and are well above average. Students in Year 13 have very good algebra skills and recall calculus work previously covered. An example of this was seen when they made use of techniques for definite and indefinite integration. They also know a good range of trigonometric identities. Achievement of students in Year 13 is very good when compared with prior attainment in GCSE. Year 12 students had only spent a week on A-level studies at the time of inspection and, because of this, it was not possible to judge their progress over time. Early indications show they are coping well with the demands of their course.

153. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan interesting and stimulating lessons. This, together with students' very good attitudes, leads to very good progress and achievement. In Year 12 and 13, work in lessons is well sequenced and broken down into manageable steps to ensure that they all understand what is being taught. All teachers provide good notes during lessons and students are encouraged to compare these with a different approach and set of examples in their textbook. Students respond well to teaching and work collaboratively on tasks set. In discussion, they make very good contributions and are confident using mathematical terminology in context. In the Year 13 lessons seen, pace was very good and students were consistently challenged. Careful attention is paid to mathematical principles, and because of this, knowledge and understanding are systematically developed. During the Year 13 lesson on trigonometric identities, effective and

imaginative use was made of mnemonics to help the recall of important formulas required for examinations. Homework is regularly set by all teachers and often includes some independent research. Students do not have enough opportunity to develop confidence and face further challenge given by open-ended tasks and independent learning. There are insufficient graphical calculators to enhance their understanding of equations and curves.

154. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers work well together and readily share expertise and ideas. Teachers new to the school or those with no previous A-level experience are well supported and are mentored by experienced colleagues. Very good relationships enable students to approach teachers for help which is available outside of lessons. Curriculum provision is very good with A/AS level courses in two option blocks and the availability of GCSE re-sit classes. There are also opportunities to do further mathematics and Advanced Extension Award. Very good assessment procedures are used to regularly assess and monitor pupils against predicted A-level performance. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

155. Generally, students demonstrate above average levels of competence in mathematics. This was evident in a psychology lesson where students were comfortable with the use of statistical techniques and demonstrated good understanding of the reliability and validity of data. Several students in physics were not studying mathematics at A-level and did not have the required mathematical skills to cope with the demands of the subject.

SCIENCE

During the inspection, physics was inspected in depth. Work in biology was sampled.

In the one lesson of biology seen, teaching was good. Biological principles were developed in a well-structured way, which allowed all the students to make good learning gains. Standards were in line with national expectations. Students were keen to learn and were developing their knowledge and understanding well. Achievement was good.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students work very hard, enjoy the subject and achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Some students need more help to develop their mathematical and graphical skills.

Commentary

156. Standards in A-level physics were above the national average in 2003, but were not as high as those in 2002, which were well above average. In both years, all the students gained at least grade E, but whilst two-thirds gained grades A or B in 2002, under half did so in 2003. Un-validated examination results in 2004 were much lower than in 2003. Three quarters of the students attained at least grade E and a quarter achieved a B grade.
157. Most students who study physics in Year 12 or Year 13 complete that part of the course. Despite the efforts made by the school, the subject is not popular with girls, reflecting the situation seen nationally. In the current Year 12, there are 21 students, but only three are girls. There is a wide spread of prior attainment among students taking physics. Although the school normally stipulates a requirement of grade B in the GCSE science and mathematics examinations, some students begin the course with lower qualifications. Some of these then find elements of the work difficult, particularly where good scientific understanding and application of mathematical principles are required. As a result, standards in the external examinations vary considerably each year.
158. From the work of Year 13 students seen during the inspection, standards are around the national average. Although students show general competence in the course requirements, a number have difficulty deriving physical formulae and fail to apply these properly. However, the majority of students are very keen to learn and willing to persevere. This, combined with good teaching in the subject, results in many of them achieving well. A few students in Year 13 show very good understanding and are attaining high standards.
159. Although Year 12 students have only just started the AS level course, they show interest and are building well on previous GCSE work. They are developing good learning skills and achievement is good. In the one lesson seen, attainment was in line with national expectations.
160. Teaching is good overall, with no unsatisfactory teaching and some that is very good. Work in the subject is generally well planned and structured. Teachers show good understanding of the subject and explain the principles clearly and precisely. As a result, students' learning is good. Where teaching is very good, particular attention is given to individual needs through well-considered assessment of students' progress. This results in students knowing exactly what they need to do to improve. Students are given very good help in developing skills to cope with the work and teachers take considerable care to improve fundamental aspects such as experimental errors and graphical methods. A student with special educational needs received good support from a teaching assistant in developing practical skills. Less successful teaching is mainly a result of inexperience of work at this level. Too little attention is given in lessons that are satisfactory to assessing students' progress in the lesson, and the work occasionally lacks direction and focus.
161. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The course is organised well and co-ordinated effectively across the three teachers involved. There is a clear understanding of examination requirements. The more experienced teachers of the subject provide very good role models for the teacher taking the course for the first time.

A new scheme of work has been introduced successfully and has been well resourced. Consequently, there are good opportunities for students to use ICT.

162. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Teachers' competence in the subject has improved, which has resulted in higher achievement. Student numbers are greater than at the time of the last inspection and target-setting is now used effectively to help students raise the standard of their work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department has worked hard to achieve very good results, particularly in vocational courses.
- The department is well led and managed

Commentary

163. Sixth-formers entered for A-level for the first time in 2004. Nearly all attained an A or B grade. 2004 was also the first year for students to enter the vocational course (AVCE), and there were more students on this than the A-level course. All the students achieved A or B grades. Students' grasp of ICT on entry into these courses is below the national average: some have not studied the subject to GCSE, and not all the others reached the target grade C at GCSE. Because of their great enthusiasm and motivation, even those at the start of Year 12 generally show average or above average standards. The standards of current Year 13 students are above average; they show a mature approach to the coursework and a growing understanding of what the subject is about and why it is so important in a wide range of contexts. Students clearly achieve very well as they pass through the sixth form; this was seen in lessons, too, whether vocational or academic.
164. Teaching is good overall, with many very good features, and students learn well through their two years on these tough courses. Though they are relaxed, they work hard and thoughtfully, and discussions between them are often very mature. Teachers know their subjects extremely well and can address even the most unusual queries; their relationships with the students are excellent.
165. The department is very well led and managed, and the very effective team of teachers work hard and with great enthusiasm. There is a good level of specialist resourcing but significant problems of deployment. Although all students have the opportunity to work towards an advanced vocational qualification through the "fast track" provision, this is hard going: not all students start the course and fewer finish. This subject was not inspected at the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning.
- Excellent support for learning through study guides and the school's web site.
- The increasing popularity of the subject at AS and A-level.

Commentary

166. Standards on entry to the sixth form are above the national average. The performance of students at AS and A-level is above national averages and, with the exception of a minor dip in performance in 2003, the trend of improvement since the time of the previous inspection has been consistently good. Achievement is good, especially so for boys.

167. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good relationships with their students, who contribute readily to discussions and so further their own understanding. Careful attention is given to the different learning styles that lead to success and this has been particularly successful in motivating boys. The excellent provision of well-structured study guides and the support on the school web site encourage independent learning. A learning forum allows students to share ideas and to review approaches to learning that they have found particularly successful. Assessment procedures are very good and provide a sound basis for students to review their progress and to take appropriate action to secure further improvement. Opportunities to use ICT are good.

168. Leadership and management are very good. Particular attention is given to ensuring that students take responsibility for their own learning and students are invited to review the effectiveness of the teaching that they receive. The study guides for all students have been produced through very good team work within the department. The range of teaching styles that is on offer to students enhances their experience still further. Fieldwork opportunities are built into the programmes of study.

169. The accommodation and resources of the department are very good. The newly-completed sixth form centre, together with adequate rooms in the main school and sufficient books and materials, means that the department is able to cope with the large increase in take up for the subject at AS level. Improvement since the last inspection has been good in maintaining the success of the subject and increasing its popularity.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good results at A-level.
- Very good improvement since last inspection.
- Very good subject knowledge and examination expertise of staff.

- Excellent resources and support available to students.
- Students' note-taking and the organisation of their folders could be more effectively monitored.

Commentary

170. Standards in history are well above average. Results in A-level examinations in 2003 were not as good as in 2002 but were still above average. Results have further improved at both A-level and AS level in 2004. The proportion of higher grades gained by boys is not as high as those gained by girls but they are higher than predicted grades. Results in AS have improved since 2002, with half the candidates achieving the higher grades in 2004.
171. Achievement of pupils in the sixth form is very good. Pupils enter with above average standards and leave with well above average standards. They benefit from the quality of teaching, excellent resources and support. They are also very talented, highly motivated and hard-working, with very good literacy skills.
172. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They divide responsibilities for the different Alevel papers and pay close attention to the requirements of the examination board in preparing students. Students' learning and understanding of historical concepts benefit from the breadth of topics covered in their course and the encouragement they are given to make connections between the different periods. The emphasis given to understanding historical concepts was particularly evident in a Year 13 class. Students were able to discuss confidently aspects of fascism and its impact upon a range of institutions; that students were confident and informed in their discussions was evident in another Year 13 class which was analysing the nature of revolutions. Examples were presented from the Reformation, through to the French and Russian Revolutions and then to the Industrial Revolution. The emphasis on understanding political concepts was clear in a Year 12 class in which students were just beginning their course. Students' learning is also helped by the wide range of resources which teachers make available to them. Some students might make more progress, however, if the resources were more specific and focused. Teachers could also check note-taking more frequently to ensure that all students have adequate notes for revision. Increasing use is being made of ICT for research and the completion of coursework, but it has yet to impact as a teaching tool.
173. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Results in history have been above average or well above average for the past four years, despite some staffing difficulties. Numbers opting for history are increasing and very few students drop the subject after taking their AS level examination. The courses are extremely well organised and resourced; students' progress is monitored and their views are taken to furnish the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. A-level history was an area for improvement in the last inspection. It is now an area of strength so improvement has been very good.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average examination results.
- Very good variety of teaching methods used well to stimulate student imagination and application.
- Very good leadership and management which has raised standards for boys.
- Very good subject knowledge used well to coach students and help students to think independently.
- Very good student attitudes to learning, underpinning very good achievement over two years.

Commentary

174. Results in psychology for 2003 were well above the national average, both overall and for those reaching higher grades (A and B). In comparison with the national picture, girls did much better than the trend for their gender in the subject, while boys matched it. The 2003 results had improved from the previous year, but were not so good in 2004 as in 2003.
175. Standards in work seen were above average in both years. Students grasp rapidly a good working knowledge of major psychological concepts and traditions, and develop the intellectual skills to question, analyse and understand them very well. They also acquire a secure knowledge of research methods through well-planned practical opportunities in class. Students understand firmly the social and historical contexts of classic studies and apply a lively questioning approach to issues such as research design and ethics. They recognise very well the applications of the subject to real life working situations and relate their own knowledge and experience readily to theoretical concepts. Achievement is very good in both years, because students work rapidly to solve problems and consolidate knowledge quickly. Those choosing to embark upon a second year of study build well on their previous very authoritative foundation of specialist knowledge.
176. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers draw on a wide variety of methods to instruct, coach and prompt students sensitively. They deploy very good subject knowledge and stage interesting demonstrations which engage students' imagination and application, and prompt independent critical thinking. A lesson on Piaget's theories of child development, for example, exploited practical materials very well to demonstrate early analyses of children's learning, before going on to enable students to explore and question issues of research methodology and the interpretation of experiments. Students benefit from good personal advice on the strengths of their work and what they should do to improve.
177. The subject is led and managed very well, so that a small team of staff share teaching methods and ideas to enhance student learning. Information on students' progress is analysed carefully, and teachers work very well as a team to take appropriate action when weaknesses are identified. As a result, the content of teaching has been altered

and boys' attainment has risen; overall standards have improved since the latest examination results.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management that makes most effective use of self-review.
- Some very stimulating teaching and a strong focus on students reaching their potential.
- Not all lessons are marked by a wide range of lively teaching and learning strategies.
- There is insufficient focus on independent learning through a greater use of computers and ongoing research on current sociological topics.

Commentary

178. A-level sociology was taken for the first time in 2004 and the provisional results indicate that standards are above the national average, especially for girls. This represents very good achievement for students who began the course with a varied range of prior knowledge and understanding. AS students reached a very high standard in their examination with 71 per cent obtaining the two top grades; achievement was very good.

179. Current standards are above average and students achieve very well. Teachers' methodology and basic theories are particularly well taught and students' answers in class indicate very good recall. Terminology and concepts are understood well and essay writing carefully nurtured. Students have a good factual knowledge of the sociology topics but there is too little in-depth evaluation of quantitative and qualitative data. Staff have missed opportunities to stress the links between the different aspects of the subject. Although students do some individual research on this, there is insufficient focus on a continuous review of current aspects.

180. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching observed ranged from very good to satisfactory. Highly successful teaching ensures that students are aware of their potential and work hard to achieve it. A stimulating lesson focused on active participation and personal experiences. Very good learning occurred. Where it is only satisfactory, teaching is not varied or lively enough, although the students benefit from the well-prepared handouts and teaching materials. Students' positive attitude promotes good learning. They were most appreciative of the thought-provoking teaching by the head of department and their teachers' very good subject knowledge and willingness to offer extra help. The more able took exams early.

181. The head of department is most effective and has been the main catalyst in the subject's very successful development. She is a gifted, highly professional teacher, who is a good role model. Very good leadership and management is a major factor in the students' high achievement. A sense of partnership is engendered, with an emphasis on continuous self-assessment, which takes account of the students' views. This is a good basis for the

department's targets, such as the improvement in the range of teaching and learning strategies. There is a strong team spirit and staff work together to enhance provision. The head of department is most adept at highlighting key areas for development as the department expands. These include a more formal approach to monitoring teaching and learning and the extension of e-learning and independent learning. The social sciences lack the accommodation that would enable staff and students to build and use an extensive resource base.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work in design folders is good, with practical outcomes.
- Teaching staff have a wide range of experience and expertise.
- Relationships and the working ethos are good.
- There are insufficient strategies to sustain or increase numbers further.
- The profile of the subject within the school and community is not high.
- Links with industry as a support to learning need have not been fully investigated.

Commentary

182. In 2003, only two students entered the A-level examination and neither passed. In 2002, results were average when six students entered. The 2004 results with seven entries showed below average results for A and B grades, with all students successful at A to E grades. At AS level in 2003, results were average but no-one gained higher than a C grade. In 2004, results were below average for A and B grades at AS level, with average results at A to E grades, indicating satisfactory achievement from their prior attainment.

183. Current standards in Year 13 are average overall, with examples of good work seen in design folders. The project on jewellery was of a good standard by most students. These projects used a wide range of presentational skills, including freehand sketching, colour, fine line pen, and use of the Internet as part of the research. Photographic evidence is also seen as part of the making process. The better designs show flair and imagination in the work supported by well annotated drawings on how materials can be decorated for effect. Where the work does not reach good standards, it is mainly due to poorer presentational skills, use of pen for drawing, poor dimensioning of drawings and where the volume of work is less than expected at this level. The use of computer-aided design (CAD) for modelling ideas is of a good standard. Achievement is satisfactory for the majority of students but there is some underachievement where students are not fulfilling their potential from Year 12. Standards in current Year 12 are also average for this stage of the course.

184. The quality of teaching and learning was good in the lessons seen during the inspection. Standards are improving from recent examination performance and the work seen in the

subject supports this judgement. In a Year 12 lesson, students were building on skills learned for GCSE and developing drawing techniques used in isometric projection. In a Year 13 lesson, students were increasing their learning of how to use primary and secondary sources of information in their research. In these lessons, students developed confidence to work as a group or independently. The responsible and mature attitude of the students contributes to their learning. Teachers use their subject expertise to develop or expand ideas with whole-class, group or individual support given.

185. The recently appointed head of department is providing satisfactory leadership and management at present. A number of changes in staffing and courses offered has caused some disruption to planning and delivery of courses but currently there are encouraging signs from the two subjects offered to A-level. Teachers' expectations are high. Monitoring procedures need to be rigorous in assessing students' progress and standards of work produced. The head of department is developing strategies to raise the profile of the subject with the school and to increase student numbers further. The subject does not, as yet, have industrial links in its planning.

186. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory over time. Recent improvement in student recruitment is good for the two subjects offered, but examination results have been poor. With current staffing, the capacity for development in the sixth form is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Music and media studies were sampled. Art and drama were inspected in full. Media studies is an increasingly popular subject at A-level. In the lesson seen, the quality of teaching was good and the teacher gave very clear explanations in order to meet the needs of students across the attainment range. Very clear advice was given about the level of research and response necessary to attain a grade A or B. Students responded well to the opportunity to use discussion to analyse a film clip. They made effective links between this and previous learning, using technical vocabulary confidently to make their responses clear and precise.

In the new music and music technology courses in the sixth form, standards are satisfactory overall and vary according to individual ability. Since the last inspection, both music and music technology courses have been offered in the sixth form.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average. Specialist teachers know their students well and provide very good academic and pastoral support.
- Teaching and learning are very good and all students benefit from individual tuition, tailored to their needs, to achieve well.
- Very good leadership promotes an industrious ethos and harmonious relationships.

- The school provides too few opportunities for students to visit galleries and experience at first-hand works of national and international importance.
- The dedicated sixth-form studio base is too cramped for the increased numbers of students.
- Relationships are excellent.

Commentary

187. Standards of work seen were well above average. This denotes good achievement from Key Stage 4. In 2003, students entered at A-level were too few to compare with national figures and trends. All passed and two candidates gained A or B grades. The subject has gained significantly in popularity, with many more students preparing for AS and A-level in 2004 and 2005.
188. Students in Year 12 quickly adapt to sixth-form work. They show increasing maturity and strive for originality. Their very well developed drawing and painting skills enable them to transcribe accurately, the images of their 'mind's eye' to paper, canvas and board. Most students can ably scale-up preparatory sketches and maquettes (model prototypes) into larger well-proportioned images and sculptures, using a variety of mathematical techniques.
189. Students in Year 13 spend long hours on coursework, both in and out of school, in order to gain the higher grades. The dedicated sixth-form studio base is too cramped to accommodate the current numbers of students. This is a constraint as they are unable to leave wet work in progress out in the main teaching areas between lessons. This cuts down on the usual 'drop-in' sessions, which sixth-formers normally use in study periods between other subjects, to complete coursework, and leads to a break in continuity. The development of work in students' sketchbooks is very good. Research skills are very well developed. Students demonstrate clear analytical thinking skills as well as the development of representational drawing and expressive skills.
190. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. Teachers regularly hold individual assessment tutorials with students to negotiate future work and agree areas for improvement. Teachers work well as a team. They share their specialist expertise, through collaborative projects, in ceramics, fabrics and painting, to enrich students' understanding and capability. Relationships are excellent, built on mutual trust and respect. Leadership is very good.
191. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement. High quality, re-designed policies and new organisational strategies underpin and improve practice.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average standards in work seen.

- Very good teaching deploying very good subject knowledge of dramatic literature and practical acting skills to inspire student interest and enthusiasm.
- Very good levels of student energy and commitment to improvised drama, movement and vocal exercises.
- The collection of specialist library books is insufficient to promote independent learning and research.

Commentary

192. A very small number of students took drama examinations in 2003, so valid national comparisons are not possible. The results in 2004 were better than those of the previous year. Standards in work seen were well above average. In Year 12, students know how to collaborate creatively to devise original interpretations of Shakespearean texts in small groups exploiting well-taught physical theatre techniques. Students understand very well the importance of concentration and teamwork and use them resourcefully to build original group performances for an audience.
193. In Year 13, students acquire very well-honed interpretive skills when studying play scripts together. They are adept at analysing the implications of setting and language for theatrical production, as a consequence of the teacher's well-focused questioning and prompting. Students employ subtle, vocally-expressive acting skills to interpret scenes perceptively. A group working on Ibsen's 'Hedda Gabler', for example, grasped the historical and social setting of the play, while demonstrating their extensive understanding of character, both through their acting and through participation in well-focused teacher-led discussion. Standards of improvised drama benefit from high levels of energy and demonstrate very good levels of team work.
194. Achievement is very good. Students concentrate hard intellectually and are strongly committed to practical work, so that they are always ready to accept and learn from new challenges. Achievement is underpinned by the way in which teachers enable students to extend previous knowledge and skills, by challenging them productively in each lesson.
195. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use very good subject knowledge of dramatic literature, practical stagecraft and improvisation techniques to involve students fully and inspire their dedication to their work. They check students' understanding as they work together, challenging them positively and offering them sensitive suggestions which lead to rapid improvement. Students benefit from very authoritative teaching of movement skills and vocal technique. Written assignments are both logical and thoughtful, making good use of information researched on the internet. However, the quality and quantity of library books is insufficient to support the development of independent learning and research skills expected in the subject.
196. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject benefits from a very good vision for its future which is building upon the recent improvement in examination results and standards.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The school provides a range of leisure, tourism and recreation courses at intermediate and advanced level. GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism was sampled. Students make good progress; they follow a parallel course in business studies that has some shared modules. Students show a good understanding of customer services because of the very effective use of role-play and the availability of very good resources. Learning is clearly very well managed and students are achieving well

BUSINESS

Business studies and economics

Provision in intermediate GNVQ and AVCE Business Studies and Economics and A-level Business Studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national average and students achieve well.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching is very good.
- The department is led and managed very well.
- Assessment information is gathered and used very effectively.
- The range of visits and links with business is excellent and all teachers have real experience of working in business or industry.
- Computers are not available in all classrooms and students are not always sufficiently independent in their learning.

Commentary

197. Very good business courses are increasingly popular. Standards are high because teaching and overall provision is very good and very good use is made of links with business and industry. In 2003, standards at A-level and AVCE business studies were well above the national average. In 2004, achievement at GNVQ intermediate was good in that two students were awarded a merit and all passed. In Business Studies at A-level and AVCE, results were lower than in 2003 but far more students were entered. At AS level, results were good in the new economics and business studies course and the majority of students have continued into A2 level.

198. The trend in results and in numbers of students is upward. There are many higher attaining students in the higher level courses in Years 12 and 13 and standards are clearly above the national average. Achievement is good in relation to results in previous tests or examinations and in current work. Attitudes to the subject are good. Male and female students succeed equally, although there are more of the former in most classes. Teaching challenges the highest attaining students but also supports those who encounter problems. In the vocational courses, students are achieving well because of the high quality of teaching and their own response.

199. Teaching is very good. Teachers are very skilled at questioning, both to assess understanding and to encourage students to think for themselves. Procedures for assessment are very effective and students know how to improve. Recent experience of

the business world enables teachers to provide apt examples and make very good use of case studies - they provide very good role models. Students in A-level classes show a clear grasp of economic theory and the ability to apply this knowledge to case studies and in their portfolio work. Students on the advanced vocational course understand the basics of motivational theory very well because of the clear examples provided. Intermediate students understand what is meant by stakeholders and have clearly made very good progress in a short time because of the range of approaches used.

200. An excellent range of visits, locally, in Europe and the USA, enhances learning. Students make good use of their part-time employment to provide insight into the world of business and commerce but they are not always sufficiently independent in their learning. The department is putting strategies into place to remedy this and has developed very good links with institutions of higher education so that students have access to very good resources. Students are skilled in using computers as part of their learning, particularly in using web sites. However, they are not able to use computers in all classrooms and the department does not yet provide the computer facilities that are essential for students on business studies courses.
201. The department is managed very well; the head of department has a clear vision of the way forward. The department works as a team and there is a clear focus on raising standards through developing both assessment and resources. Improvement since the last inspection has clearly been very good. New courses have been introduced and there is now a consistently high quality of teaching and learning. Business-related courses are increasingly popular because of the high reputation of this successful department that offers Young Enterprise opportunities for all students in Year 12.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

